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"I AM GOING TO BE MARRIED, BUT I AM MISERABLE!" SAID DOLLY, SLOWLY.

THE TWO ROSES.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

If this story has a moral it is a simple one—don't name your daughters after any sister of her father's however delightful that sister may be, unless she has already entered the bonds of holy matrimony. If you do so you will at best subject your child to the risk of never getting a letter of her own (if staying with her aunt and namesake) until it has been opened and read—of course, by mistake. And at the worst, why it is just possible you might have to look on and see some stroke of good luck specially designed by Providence for the niece calmly appropriated by the aunt.

But these facts never occurred to poor, pretty Hilda Delaval when she found herself dying—a

forlorn, desolate little widow, with a little slumbering bundle of infant humanity beside her, whose life was surely costing her her own.

Perhaps she was not so sorry to lay down her burden of life, for her lot had not been a dazzling one.

A beautiful girl, child of doating parents, she had chosen to give up all for love, and make a runaway match with a man hardly so well off as her father's butler.

For six months she was perfectly, profoundly happy. Then Hugh Delaval took to his bed with a low fever, and was dead before his child-wife knew of his danger.

A few weeks of bitter grief, and Hilda, at nineteen, was following him on the last long journey, tenderly cared for by Hugh's young sister—a tall, unformed girl of seventeen, who had left her home with her father in the north of England to do her best for her brother's widow.

Rose Delaval was a born nurse; she seemed to know by instinct just what to do and what to

leave undone. She had never seen Hilda until summoned to her brother's deathbed; but she loved her at first sight, and she had tried to buoy her up with thoughts of the quiet home in Westmoreland, and the kindly welcome awaiting her there.

Alas! poor, pretty Mrs. Delaval would want no more earthly welcomes. Doctor and nurse had both told the young sister-in-law the truth; and now, at Hilda's express desire, she and her baby were left alone with the one friend they could claim—the tall, slender, seventeen-year-old aunt.

"You will be good to her, Rose? Poor child, you are the only mother she will ever know."

"Of course I will!" said Miss Delaval, promptly. "My father will love her as his own child. You know, Hilda, he would have welcomed you."

"I know. You'll call her Rose, dear!"

"Why not Hilda?"

"I promised Hugh."

"Hugh!"

"He always said he would call the baby after you—it is a girl. He said he did not want there to be two Hilda Delavals. So you will call her Rose!"

"If you wish it."

"I do. I don't think mine has been a lucky name. I seem to have brought only sorrow to all who loved me."

"Don't say that, dear! Remember, you made Hugh happy."

"But if he had not toiled hard, for my sake, he might not have caught the fever that killed him."

It was no time to argue with her; Rose felt that. She stooped to kiss the sleeping baby.

"You know we will do our best for her, Hilda. But there are your own parents. Don't you think they will feel to have the best claim on your little girl?"

"No!" and excitement lent the dying mother fresh strength. "Rose, as you love me, promise me you will never tell them of her birth. Oh! don't forsake my child—don't let her go among those who hated her father, and drove her mother into exile! Promise me she shall never leave you!"

"Never, until she is old enough to choose. I promise that freely. Oh, Hilda! if you could only stay with us, we could make you so happy in our beautiful Westmoreland."

Hilda shook her head.

"I could never be happy anywhere now. I should be wanting Hugh always. You see, Rose, when one loves as we did it is not for a month or a year, but for all time. Nothing would ever have comforted me; it is best as it is."

And with her hand clasped fast in that of her sister-in-law, poor, pretty Hilda Delaval closed her eyes on the world which had not been all sunshine to her, and which, though not yet twenty, she was well content to leave.

A week later the two Roses left the small suburban lodgings, and travelled to Westmoreland, where, in a pretty rural village, stood the old Rectory, where the elder Rose had been born, and where her old father and blind mother were eagerly awaiting their sunbeam.

There is a great deal said about unkindness, and the grudging reception meted out to poor relations. But perhaps Westmoreland is behind the world in its feelings, for Hilda's baby was received by the old grandparents as joyfully as though it had brought them a fortune.

There was kindly grief for the poor young mother, but a deep content that their boy's only child was to be their own.

"Give her up, indeed!" said the Rector, with a nearer approach to anger than his wife had ever seen. "Give her up to the proud folks who drove her mother from the house, and scouted my boy as not good enough for them! Not while I have a crust to share with her. She's my grandchild, and my lord and lady shall not get hold of her if there's law in England!"

He might have spared himself the outburst. Ten years passed on, and no attempt was made to rob them of the little orphan. She grew up in the pleasant Westmoreland village, as much his own as though she had no other kith and kin. Perhaps the noble family who had disowned Hilda did not even know that she had left a child—perhaps they scorned the baby as they had done her father.

Anyway they made no advances, and the old Rector and his blind wife were gathered to their rest without ever having had to defend their claim to their son's child.

Rose Delaval senior was thirty, and Rose Delaval junior thirteen, when they had to leave their pretty, old-fashioned home.

The Rector had been a prudent man, and his savings, augmented by the sum for which he had insured his life, would bring in nearly two hundred a year.

So there was no fear of actual poverty to haunt the elder Rose, and for her niece's benefit she moved to London, and took a small semi-detached house in the neighbourhood of Kensington, that Rose might attend art classes, and see something of the parks and museums.

Time had dealt very kindly with the Rector's daughter. She was quite as plain as her un-

formed girlhood. But her simple, tranquil life in the sleepy Westmoreland village had left her complexion fresh and rosy. There was not a line on her face, nor a wrinkle on her brow, and she looked fully ten years less than her real age.

She was a sensible woman, and brought up her niece kindly and well; but she had one terror which haunted her perpetually.

It had sprung up on her sister-in-law's death-bed, and never wholly left her—that some day or other her mother's relatives would put in a claim to little Rose.

So long as the Rector lived the fear was only a sleeping one, for she knew that his claim was as near, or nearer, than the one she dreaded.

But the moment her father died the terror woke afresh. What was she at last but Rose's aunt, a single, unprotected female of narrow means? How could she hope to keep the child against the claims of a grandfather of noble blood, and backed by a handsome fortune to support his views.

Miss Delaval fairly worshipped her niece, and the thought of losing her was positive pain. To guard against it she took the greatest pains to hide herself and Rose from all chance meetings. They lived in the strictest retirement—they never made a single friend.

No one was allowed to cross the threshold. Even for extra precaution, the aunt denied her darling the use of her proper name, and continued the pet title of Dolly, by which she had been known in her baby days.

Miss Delaval was devoted heart and soul to Dolly. But it never occurred to her she might be doing the girl an injury in thus keeping her hidden away from any clearer recognition from her relatives.

And so five years ebbed peacefully away.

Dolly was eighteen, and as tall as her aunt. It was the only link of resemblance between them.

Rose Delaval the elder was stout and rosy—a good face, but plain and hard-featured, with nothing to attract strangers; and Dolly was her mother's own child, with all the dead Hilda's beauty, only, instead the air of fragility which even in her girlhood had marked the young wife as a house flower.

Miss Delaval almost groaned when she looked at her niece. It seemed to her that no one could look at Dolly without guessing at her parentage. She kept her as secluded as possible, and yet she was full of fears.

June had come round again and brought Dolly's eighteenth birthday. They made quite a little festival of it at Acacia Cottage. There were strawberries and cream, a home-made cake and other delicacies.

The tea was spread in the little garden, and Miss Delaval and Dolly lingered over it in full enjoyment of the pleasant summer evening.

It was the heroine of the day who broke the silence.

"Aunt, isn't it strange we have no friends?"

Miss Delaval started; she had always feared a time might come when Dolly would be curious. Surely it had not come already!

"Why, no," she answered, briskly, as though the thing were most natural. "You see, Dolly, we are not rich; we couldn't give parties and entertain. Poor people never make friends!"

"But all the other people in this road don't seem much richer than we are! I'm sure their houses look over so much shabbier, and they haven't a tidy servant like Susan!"

Miss Delaval admitted, with a glow of housewifely pride, that Acacia Cottage certainly looked as nice or nicer than its neighbours, and that Susan was the neatest servant in the road.

Too late she saw her mistake, for Dolly followed up her advantage remorselessly.

"Well, the other people have friends. I don't mean they give parties, but they have people come to tea and drop in to see them. Now, we never do; for all the use it is to us, auntie, we need never have a knocker! You and I have our latch-key, the tradespeople go to the back gate, no one but our two selves ever goes up the steps at all!"

"I don't think this is a sociable place, Dolly."

"Don't you wish it was?"

"Not particularly."

In truth, she had selected a suburban residence for the express reason that it was possible to reside for years next door to a person in such a locality without getting acquainted.

"I am eighteen to-day, you know, auntie, and I don't know anyone!"

"Not here," said Miss Delaval gently. "Not here, perhaps, but we have plenty of friends left in Westmoreland."

Dolly's face brightened.

"Dear old Westmoreland! I should like to go back there—not to live, you know, but just on a visit. The Squire has asked us so many times, auntie. Don't you think we might go this summer?"

"Not for worlds," was the unspoken reply of Rose Delaval's heart, but she only said aloud, "I had other plans for this season, Dolly."

Dolly clasped her hands.

"Do you mean it, really? Had you really thought of going somewhere! Oh, auntie! how delightful!"

"Are you so very tired of London, Dolly?"

"Not of London; but auntie, this place isn't London! It calls itself Kensington, but it's Fulham really! It's full of make-believes. It isn't town, it isn't country. All the streets look like each other, and one can't get away from bricks-and-mortar; and you know, Aunt Rose, we have been here five years without going away even for a day!"

"I know all that, Dolly, and I have been planning to go to the seaside. Everything is settled nearly, and I think we can start on the first of July."

Dolly hugged her enthusiastically.

"And where to?"

"You shall have your choice of any place in Kent or Sussex."

"Do let's go indoors," was the prompt reply, "and get Bradshaw and an atlas. I should like to look out our train at once!"

"You had better settle first where you are going to."

"So I had. Auntie, we will be extravagant and send Susan for a newspaper. All the excursion trains and cheap trips are in that, and I haven't even an idea what seaside places there are easy to get at."

Miss Delaval smiled and gave way. She produced the penny for the paper, and as soon as Susan had removed all traces of the feast she was despatched to the nearest newsagent's.

Dolly sat down with paper and pencil, prepared to take note of any desirable places whose attractions Miss Delaval might read out; but her aunt was so long in beginning she grew the least bit impatient.

"I'm quite ready, auntie."

No answer.

"Aunt Rose, do begin."

The paper fluttered unheeded to the ground.

In an agony Dolly saw that Miss Delaval had fallen back helpless on the sofa, her eyes were closed, her face white as death.

To call for Susan was the work of an instant. Then the two chafed the ice cold hands, and applied brandy to the tightly clenched teeth. But it was a long time before their efforts met with any success; then a long gasping sigh, followed by a fit of sobbing, terrified Dolly as much as the swoon itself.

She was thankful when Miss Delaval, speaking in her natural voice, but shivering as though it had been winter, said she thought she would go to bed.

"And, Dolly, I shall not want anything again to-night. Don't come in and disturb me as you go to bed; rest is all I need. A good night's sleep, and I dare say I shall be quite myself by the morning."

Dolly obeyed with the unquestioning submission of one accustomed to be ruled. She was very troubled about her aunt, and when she was left alone felt very near to tears. Then she remembered the proposed excursion. Of course a week or two at the seaside was what auntie needed; she would come back again as strong as ever.

This reflection proved a wonderful restorative to Dolly, and she sat down in the best of spirits.



resolved to search the advertisements herself, and decide whether Brighton, or Dover, Margate, or Eastbourne would be the best place to honour with their patronage.

But her resolution was vain—the paper had disappeared.

"Susan must have moved it in the fright of aunt's illness," decided Dolly.

But Susan strenuously denied doing anything of the kind. Her theory was it must have blown out of the window, and Dolly had to put up with the loss; and presently crept up to bed with the great question still unsolved of what spot should be the scene of their summer wandering.

She need not have moved so quietly, for Miss Delaval was not asleep. Had Dolly's eyes only had power to penetrate into her aunt's room she would have seen her wrapped in her dressing-gown, seated at her writing-table, busily employed in the composition of a letter whose wording seemed a sore difficulty to her; while again and again she consulted the newspaper whose loss Dolly had so much deplored, which, instead of having been blown out of the window, had been carefully taken possession of by the mistress of Asocia Cottage.

After eighteen years of suspense her fear was realised at last. After eighteen years of secure possession, people were striving to deprive her of her one ewe lamb, but she would not give up Dolly without a struggle. She had received her from her dying mother, therefore she had the best right to her. Besides, did eighteen years of love and guidance count for nothing? No, she would fight her cause to the very death.

Nevertheless, she was sorely puzzled how to begin the letter, and kept seeking assistance from the advertisement which had so troubled her.

It was a very simple advertisement, but it was in the agony column; and I think few women could bear to be appealed to from that particular column of the newspaper without feeling a little nervous.

"ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD—Wanted the present address of Rose Delaval, only child of Hugh Delaval, and Hilda his wife, deceased. Born in London, June 20th, 1879, and taken in infancy to the country. The above reward will be paid to any person giving the whereabouts of this young lady, or the same amount will be paid for positive proof of her death. Apply to Dyson and Carlyle, Solicitors, Pump-court, Temple."

The end was that Miss Delaval tore up her attempts at letter-writing, crept downstairs, and brought back "Bradshaw," studied its pages attentively, and then went where her niece imagined her to have been for hours—to bed.

"Auntie," was Dolly's bewildered exclamation, when Miss Delaval came into her room about seven o'clock the next morning, ready dressed in her walking things, "where on earth are you going?"

"I am going to Westmoreland!"

Dolly gasped.

"There is grievous trouble threatening us both, Dolly; I cannot tell you more now. I shall be away three days, only before I go I want you to give me your word you will not leave the house until I return."

"Auntie!"

Rose Delaval's grasp tightened on Dolly's wrist.

"I am going on urgent business, Dolly! I have to consult the Squire on a matter that is life or death to me, but I will not leave you unless I have your promise. Can you hesitate? It is but for three days."

Dolly gave in at once.

"I shall be moped to death," she expostulated, prettily; "but I can't vex you when you have been so ill. I promise faithfully I won't leave the house until you come back; only, auntie," and the spoilt child made a little pout—"be merciful; don't take advantage of my abject submission to be gone a week or two. If you don't come back at the end of your three days, I shall go melancholy mad."

Miss Delaval smiled half sadly.

"If I am alive, Dolly, I shall be at home the day after to-morrow!"

"It is the strangest thing I ever heard of," commented Miss Dolly to herself, when her aunt had departed, turning over on her side for a farewell doze before rising to the dreariness of her lonely day. "Aunt Rose, who hates travelling, who won't even go as far as Oxford-street if she can help it, and who had never been away from me in her life, suddenly, without a word of warning, sets off for Westmoreland! I can't make it out. She always seemed to so dislike the idea of going back to the old place! I'm sure the Squire has written to invite us every summer, but she would never hear of it, and now she has rushed off like this! What can it mean!"

CHAPTER II.

THE Squire (a title still prevailing in that remote Westmoreland village) was a man of seventy, but hale and hearty still.

Rose Delaval had always been a favourite with him; years ago he had been rumoured she was to marry his only son, but nothing ever came of the report. Claude Dugdale went abroad, and the old man remained alone in his grand old home, never breaking his intimacy at the Rectory, and letting all the world see plainly that he would have been quite willing to receive Miss Delaval as a daughter-in-law.

He had been very vexed when she left the north, had begged her to come to the Castle, and told Dolly he was a kind of adopted grandchild, but she shook her head. She thanked the Squire for all his kindness, claimed one very solemn promise of him, and then turned her back upon her native village, and went to form a new home at Asocia Cottage.

Squire Dugdale did not forget her; he sent many a hamper of country produce, with a letter neatly folded at the top; and he addressed this note to Miss Delaval, but to "R.D." almost as though he were afraid for his favourite's name to be seen. Had she been a fugitive hiding from justice he could not have been more careful. In all his letters was an invitation to come to the Castle, and all ended up with the same phrase, "The emergency you expected has not yet arisen; if ever it should do so you will find a Dugdale is faithful to his trust."

A telegram apprised the Squire of his guest's coming. When, faint and spent with her long journey in the dark night hours, Rose Delaval reached Appleby, the Squire's close carriage was waiting to drive her the ten miles to the Castle, and the splendid horses stepped out briskly, so that the distance seemed a mere nothing, and through it all the old Squire said nothing; and would not let his favourite speak, but just sat there holding her hand.

Not till they were at the Castle, and her hat and coat were removed, not till she had done justice to a savoury repast, would he let her tell him her errand. Then he patted her shoulder, and said, in his fatherly way—

"Perhaps you will sleep better if we have had our talk. Come to the library, and let me hear all about it."

Rose Delaval drew a newspaper cutting from her purse. It was the advertisement which had brought about her journey.

The Squire read it gravely.

"When did you see this?"

"Last night."

"Then you have done nothing?"

"Nothing!"

"I am beforehand with you then. I saw the notice a month ago, and I wrote to the lawyers to ask what it was all about."

"You wrote to them?" reproachfully. "Oh! Squire, how could you!"

"It was the only thing to be done. Then if I told you you would frighten yourself into fits. I wrote and asked for information. I thought they would know the master of Dugdale Castle was not a man to be trifled with."

"And it is as I feared—Lord Dorton wants to claim my darling!"

"It is not as you feared. Lord Dorton is dead and his wife also. He left his estate, fortune, furniture, houses, all he had to the nephew, who succeeded to his title on one condition. Can you guess it?"

"Has it anything to do with Dolly?"

"Everything! The new Earl only enjoys his estates, only touches his vast wealth on condition that he marries Rose Delaval, only child of his cousin Hilda."

"But it is monstrous! Dolly is a baby!"

"She is eighteen, and the Earl is nine-and-twenty. Only her death or her refusal to accept him can release Lord Dorton from the necessity of marrying her."

"And if he refuses?"

"It all goes to her. In that case your Dolly would be the richest heiress in England."

Rose Delaval kept silence. She thought of the beautiful girl she loved so dearly. She remembered Dolly's yearnings for a wider life, her longings after ease and amusement. It seemed to the aunt never fate could be fairer than her favourite's, if only Lord Dorton could be brought to refuse the honour of her hand.

"You are surprised?" said the Squire, slowly.

"What do you think of it?"

"She shall never be forced to marry anyone."

"My dear Rose, no one has any object in forcing her. Her refusal would leave Lord Dorton free to enjoy his wealth, and choose any bride he pleased. What I think of is the splendid position she would hold if this match were brought about! Fancy our little Dolly an English countess!"

"With a husband who despised her!"

"I think you are hard on Dorton! He is a fine young fellow. I met him often before he came into the title, and I assure you that Dolly could not be in better hands."

"I can't believe in a man ready to marry a girl he has never seen, just for money."

"You put it harshly. As it happens, he is as indignant at the will as you can be. But the position is this. He is young and heart-whole; he has never yet seen the woman he would care to make his wife, and so he is perfectly willing to see your Dolly, and try if he can care for her."

"She is to be shown to him on approval! How very condescending, to be sure!"

"Rose!"

"I can't help it, Squire! Dolly is the darling of my life!"

"My dear, there need be no trouble for her in the matter. Until Lord Dorton has seen her there is no need even to mention the subject to her. Then, if he admires her he can propose in due form. There is not the slightest occasion for her to know all that hinges on the proposal."

"I hate concealment!"

"It seems to me, Rose, you hate a great many things. Try to be calm, and tell me your own wishes!"

"I want Lord Dorton to refuse to marry Dolly. She is so bright and beautiful, Squire, and she longs for pleasures and pretty things. A little taste of money and luxury would make her so happy!"

The Squire smiled.

"You are a true woman. You think only of one side. You won't pity poor Dorton if he's left with only three or four hundred a year on which to keep up his title. You'd had better go to bed and think over it. How young you look, Rose! You'd pass for five-and-twenty any day!"

In general, Miss Delaval was superior to compliments, but this one pleased her. Tired as she was she stood a long while before the looking-glass that night, trying hard to solve the question whether a wild scheme that had just entered her busy brain was capable of realisation.

She knew that she was plain—what some people would call ugly. So much the better for her plan; but was she young-looking. Could she, a woman of five-and-thirty, really attempt to pass for a much less age?

Rose summed up her good points. Her complexion was smooth and rosy as a girl's. Her figure was plump, but it was the plumpness which

often accompanies youth rather than the matronly embodiment of middle age. There were silver threads in the front of her hair, but that mattered nothing.

I am afraid Squire Dugdale's guest got very little repose that night. She looked quite pale and tired when she appeared at breakfast.

"Well," said the host, in his genial tone. "Have you thought things over?"

"I have."

"And come to a conclusion?"

"Yes. Dolly shall meet Lord Dornton and give him a fair chance of pleasing her. Perhaps you will kindly write to the lawyers for me!"

"Certainly. What I shall I say?"

"Say that Miss Delaval is residing with her aunt at Acacia Cottage, Repton-road, West Kensington, and will be glad to make his acquaintance if he will call any day next week."

"I never saw such a good woman as you are, Rose!" said the old man, heartily; "you sacrifice the best years of your life to your niece, and then step back and give up all claim to her when you see it's for her good."

Rose winced.

"Don't praise me!" she said, simply. "I can't bear it. Don't write the letter until I am on my way home please!"

CHAPTER III.

CHAMBERS at the West-end, furnished with taste and luxury, a young man sitting at a small writing-table, a moody look on his handsome face as he tossed over a pile of letters.

"I wonder how many of these people will remember my existence when Miss Delaval is discovered, and from the master of Dornton Park and its rich revenues I become a plain country gentleman of nowhere in particular, with three hundred a year for sole income! I declare I wish my cousin were found, and something settled. Anything would be better than this horrible suspense."

A small page tapped at the door and announced—

"Mr. Dyason, my lord."

Lord Dornton started. It must surely be no slight cause which brought his family lawyer there at that hour. It was barely eleven o'clock. Mr. Dyason must have come straight from home; he could hardly have had time for more than a passing call at his office.

The two men shook hands; then, as the page closed the door, the Earl turned to his visitor.

"I am sure something has happened?"

"Yes."

"Good or bad? Don't keep me in suspense, Dyason; think of all there is at stake."

"I don't want to do so, my lord. I will tell you all I know; but I can't say whether you will call the tidings good or bad. Your cousin is found!"

Lord Dornton looked up quickly.

"Found—where?"

"It's the old story. We have been looking far afield for what was close at hand. While we have been scouring the country for her, Miss Delaval has been residing at Kensington under the protection of her aunt."

"And you are sure of this?"

"Positive. My informant is Squire Dugdale, of Dugdale Castle. He says he has known her from a child, and she lived in his village until her grandfather's death, five years ago, when she and her aunt removed to London."

Lord Dornton groaned.

"And she is unmarried?"

"Decidedly; she has been educated in the greatest seclusion, and, Mr. Dugdale writes, has never been allowed any gentleman acquaintance."

"A bread-and-butter schoolgirl!"

Mr. Dyason tried to be consoling.

"It might have been much worse, Lord Dornton. Evidently your cousin has been brought up as a lady. Being so young you will be able to train her to your own tastes, and form her mind."

The Earl threw up his hands.

"I never had any taste for the rôle of amateur schoolmaster. I am quite sure Miss Delaval will be odious, and we shall detest each other."

"Haden't you better wait until you have seen her before you make up your mind?"

"I hate the whole business."

"Perhaps you would prefer to resign everything. In that case, if your mind is made up to refuse Miss Delaval's hand, I see no good in your being introduced to her."

"I can't go so far as to say I am ready to resign everything! Fancy an earl without a family mansion, and with barely six pounds a week on which to maintain his dignity!"

"Lord Dornton, I wish you would be frank with me in your own interests!"

"I am—astonishingly frank, I tell you the precise amount of my income if I refuse Miss Delaval!"

"I don't mean that! Is it your wish to come to an arrangement with the young lady?"

"I hardly understand!"

Mr. Dyason looked at him searchingly.

"Is it to matrimony in the abstract you have such an objection, Lord Dornton, or merely to wedding Miss Delaval?"

"I have old-fashioned notions, Dyason. I think a man should marry for love; and as I never have been in love, and feel not the slightest sign of becoming a victim to the tender passion, I would much rather leave matrimony alone!"

"Even were there no question of the fortune, you owe it to your family to marry!"

"Hardly! I have a brother, a year younger than myself, who married a bishop's daughter, and enjoys a very comfortable living. There are two olive branches already in the vicarage nursery, so that the title of Dornton is in no danger of extinction!"

"If you really have an aversion to matrimony—"

"I have!" interrupted the Earl, "under the conditions presupposed! I should hate to pass my days with a woman who knew I had married for her fortune, and whom I was well aware had accepted me to secure the same!"

"I shouldn't wonder if you and Miss Delaval hit it off beautifully!"

"Fall in love to order, eh?"

"Not precisely! She has an aunt to whom she is much attached, and from whom she dreads to be separated. I think you will find a moderate allowance and the title of Countess would be far more appreciated by your cousin than the position of your constant companion. However, all that has yet to be arranged! When will you call upon Miss Delaval?"

"No time like the present! I will go this afternoon, and you had better come back to dinner, Dyason, and hear the result of the interview!"

It was about four when Lord Dornton drove down Repton-road. All the other houses were in a flutter of excitement when they saw a handsome stop at the door of Acacia Cottage. Never before in the last five years had the little dwelling been known to have a visitor.

"Is Miss Delaval at home?"

Susan looked as though she thought the world was coming to an end, but she answered, respectfully, Miss Delaval was within.

"What name, sir?"

"Lord Dornton!"

Susan gasped, ushered him into the little drawing-room, and rushed upstairs two steps at a time, to carry the news to her mistress.

Lord Dornton felt a nameless aversion when he saw his destined bride. She looked years older than her age; her dress was too smart; her whole get-up too manifestly studied. Besides, there was so much of her; he admired tall, slender figures. Well, Rose Delaval was certainly tall, but she was so plump, her waist would have taken a long arm to encircle it.

"I think we hardly need an introduction!" she said, flippantly. "Your name has long been known to me, though I little guessed the circumstances under which we should meet."

This was intolerable. Why, the woman was actually alluding to his marrying her; the brazenness of the whole scene jarred on Dornton's every instinct!

"I should never have known you!" said the Earl, coldly. "You do not in the least resemble your mother, I suppose you take after the Delavals."

"I suppose so."

Lord Dornton felt extremely awkward. He had come fully intending to introduce the subject of their union, but he had never expected to find his destined bride alone. Where was the aunt of whom he had heard so much? It would have been far easier to discuss future plans with her than with this marvellously composed young lady herself.

"I understood from Mr. Dugdale's letter to my lawyers that you had a relation with you. May I not see her?"

"I am very sorry but she is not at home. If could you call to-morrow I should be delighted for her to see you."

This was better.

"You are very fond of her?"

"I think I may say that never were aunt and niece more fondly attached."

"It would doubtless be very painful for her to contemplate losing you!"

"It would be terrible for me to think of a separation from her," answered Rose Delaval with genuine feeling.

Lord Dornton thought of Mr. Dyason's hint, and breathed again.

"May I speak to you quite frankly?" he asked, "just as though we were discussing the fate of other people instead of a question which concerns us both?"

"I always prefer plain speaking," continued Rose Delaval, calmly. "I know that by your uncle's will you lose a handsome fortune if you refuse to marry his granddaughter. I am aware that if the refusal comes from her she derives no benefit from the Dornton property. It seems to me a most absurd will."

"I perfectly agree with you."

"No two people ever yet fell in love to order. It is monstrous to expect it!"

"I am very glad to find you so sensible, Miss Delaval. Now, you must understand what I say is meant in no disparagement to yourself. We are placed in a very embarrassing position, and I think it is best for both of us that we should understand each other from the first."

"Far best!"

"I don't like poverty!"

"And I am not attached to it."

"Precisely. Now I am perfectly fancy free. I have not the slightest desire to marry anyone; in fact, I never yet saw the woman with whom I could pass my life. Don't you think we might come to some amicable arrangement? Couldn't we be married and then separate? I would see that all fitting respect was paid you as Lady Dornton. I should give you the choice of my two country seats and half my income to keep up your dignity. I have been a wanderer all my life, so people would see nothing extraordinary in my roving about still. Of course, from time to time we could meet. Don't you think we should be far better friends by this plan than if we, caring nothing for each other, and knowing the motive which led to our marriage, set up housekeeping together, and tried to palm ourselves off on the world as a very attached couple?"

Rose Delaval paused. She seemed to be weighing his words.

"But if you ever wanted to marry anyone else?"

"I couldn't. I am quite willing to run the chance of that. The same risk would be encountered by you."

"No," said Rose, quietly. "I think not. A woman does not give her love till sought; and a wife who respects herself, even if she be a wife in name only, is not likely to be exposed to such seeking."

"You speak with wonderful knowledge of the world. It seems hard to realise that you are a mere child."

Miss Delaval did not consider it necessary to take any notice of this remark.

"Will you consider my proposal?" began Lord Dornton, gravely; "and let me know how you regard it?"

"I think," said his companion, slowly; "there is a great deal of sense in it, but I should like to think it over and consult my—relation."

"Certainly. When may I call again? Perhaps it would be more agreeable to you if your aunt and I discussed the business part of the arrangement—supposing, of course, that you are disposed to think favourably over my suggestions."

"It might be better. This is Tuesday. If you will call again on Saturday, Lord Dornton, I promise you you shall have your answer."

The Earl departed.

"I have done no wrong," she muttered to herself, when conscience smote her for her deception. "I told him I was Rose Delaval, so I am. When it came to other things I spoke in the third person. I have a perfect right to take care of Dolly. I don't dislike the Earl nearly so much as I expected, but with his peculiar ideas about love he shall never have a chance of breaking my darling's heart."

"Oh, Miss Dolly!" exclaimed Susan, when the girl came in a little later. "Why weren't you at home before? There's been the grandest gentleman you ever saw!"

"To see us!"

"To see your aunt. Bless me, Miss Dolly, he came in a handsome cab; and when I asked him his name he said he was Lord Dornton. Fancy me opening the door to a real nobleman! I declare you might have knocked me down with a feather!"

Miss Delaval knew from Dolly's face she had heard something, but she put off her disclosures till tea was over, then she asked, tenderly,—

"Dolly, do you ever think about your mother—your beautiful young mother who died when you were born?"

"Often, Aunt Rose. I don't miss her, you know, because you are so good to me; but I often wish I knew something about her."

Very simply Rose Delaval told the dead Hilda's story, and how she had given her little girl to her young sister-in-law's charge.

"Dolly, all these years I have been haunted by the fear of a parting from you. I thought your mother's kindness would be sure to claim you, and now the blow has fallen. The gentleman who came this afternoon is your cousin, Lord Dornton, and he wants to take you from me!"

"But he can't!" said Dolly, composedly. "You are my aunt, and an aunt is a much nearer relation than a cousin!"

"But if it is for your good, Dolly!"

"I hate things that are for one's good. I dare say he's a horrible old man."

"He is not old at all, Dolly—nine-and-twenty I think—and very handsome!"

"Then he'd have a horrid wife."

"He is not married. He came here this afternoon to ask you to be his wife!"

"Me!" said Dolly, in her amazement forgetting all rules of grammar. "Why, he must be mad, auntie. He has never even set eyes on me."

"I know!"

"I never mean to marry anyone!" said Dolly, promptly, "and certainly not an utter stranger. Don't you think yourself, auntie, my cousin must be mad!"

"No, dear!"

Dolly looked at her strangely.

"I do believe you want me to do it!"

"I think I do."

"Auntie!" and there were tears in the girl's eyes. "I would not have believed it of you. Fancy wanting me to marry a man I have never seen, just to be free of me! Oh! you are cruel—cruel!"

"Dolly, can't you trust me?"

Dolly dried her eyes.

"Was I ever unkind to you before?"

"Never, but—"

"But you can't understand this; I want to try and make it clear to you."

"You can't."

"I think I can. Your grandfather was a very rich man, and his two nearest relations were you and his nephew. His title must go to the latter—his estates and fortune he could leave to whom

he pleased. He had loved your cousin as a son, but you were his own grandchild, and so he did not like to pass you quite over. I think myself it was a great mistake, but I dare say he believed it fair. He left all his vast property between you, on condition that you married each other."

"And if we refused?"

"The one who refused lost all. If Lord Dornton were unwilling to marry you he must resign all his uncle's property. If you refuse his hand, you must go on in this plain little house, in this same quiet life you find so dull."

Dolly sighed.

"I don't want to be married—and then I have never seen Lord Dornton."

"He proposes, Dolly, that you should be married, and retain your freedom."

"I don't understand."

"That you should be called Lady Dornton and have a beautiful house, with servants, and horses and carriages, more money than you know how to spend, and your poor old aunt to take care of you."

"And my husband?" asked Dolly, comically.

"He would go his own way retaining an ample share of his uncle's wealth. There would be not the slightest occasion for you to meet him. You could part at the church door, save that you bore a new name, and were rich instead of poor. I don't think being married would make any difference to you."

Dolly looked thoughtful.

"Then I shouldn't have to see him at all! It would be just as though he were dead and had left me his name and all his money!"

Miss Delaval was too truthful not to suggest the drawback Dolly had not seen.

"Only one thing, dear. While he lived, you could never marry anyone else."

"I shouldn't want to, auntie. I think the Earl has been very clever to think of such a way of dividing the property. I shall have you all to myself, and all the beautiful things we used to long for as well."

"And am I to tell Lord Dornton you consent?" asked Miss Delaval, anxiously.

"I think so; only, auntie, he must never ask to see me. I couldn't see him, it would make me feel hot all over; and he must wait three months."

"There is no need for you to see him, dear. Why do you want him to wait three months? It seems to me the matter would be far better settled at once!"

Dolly blushed crimson.

"I should like him to have time to think it over in case he might be sorry afterwards. Isn't it strange, auntie, I have never seen him! I never mean to see him, but I shouldn't like to feel he wanted to marry someone else and couldn't just because I was his wife."

"I understand; he is coming on Saturday afternoon, Dolly."

"Then I shall go out."

When Lord Dornton saw his fiancée's aunt, he was astonished at the striking resemblance between them. The short curls, the finery, and the juvenile manner were misleading, but otherwise the quiet, middle-aged lady in black silk seemed the image of the girl he had met. He liked the aunt far better than he had done the niece.

Five minutes in her company told him she was a good, true-hearted woman, and he fell to wondering her training had not produced more attractive results in his objectionable cousin.

"Your niece has doubtless told you the result of our interview?" he began.

"I have heard all about it, Lord Dornton. Perhaps I consider my child's happiness more than yours, but I must confess I am in favour of the match."

"I think it is for my advantage too. You see, madam, I was brought up to think myself my uncle's heir. I have no profession, I must confess to fastidious tastes and expensive habits, I don't think I could endure life with an income of three hundred a year, and I shall be very glad if I am spared the necessity of trying."

Aunt Rose sighed.

"My niece is perfectly willing to consent to your proposed plan on two conditions."

"I hope they are easy of fulfilment."

"Very. The first is, that you part at the church door and never seek to become acquainted with her either before or after your wedding-day."

"I should have preferred our relations to be on a more friendly footing. I thought we might be fairly intimate as—cousins."

"I think she is right. The child has a proud nature, and she declares she must be to you all or nothing!"

"I will bow to her decision, Miss Delaval, and can only hope the other condition is equally simple."

"It is more so. She wishes three months to elapse before your wedding-day!"

"I don't like that," said Lord Dornton, quietly. "I would much rather have settled things at once."

"So would I," admitted his hostess; "but she says it is not fair on you—that you ought to have a chance of being able to change your mind."

Lord Dornton smiled.

"I ought to know my own mind at nine-and-twenty. My cousin is eleven years younger, and she seems to have no fears for herself."

"She is inflexible on these two points. Perhaps you would prefer to think over them!"

"No, I don't think so. It will be a relief to know the matter is arranged. I think, Miss Delaval, as we are now so nearly at the end of June, I will ask your niece to fix our wedding for the first of October. I propose to settle the Yorkshire estate on her and the half of my income. Regarding her other wish, I pledge you my word never to foist myself on her notice. Indeed, I will send down my solicitor to make all the needful arrangements lest another visit from myself might prove distasteful to my cousin. Mine is a singular position, Miss Delaval, to be on the eve of marriage with a girl whose one desire is to have nothing to do with me."

"There are a great many strange marriages nowadays," remarked the spinster, gravely; "and really, Lord Dornton, some of them turn out remarkably well."

"I hope mine may be of the number!" was the Earl's rejoinder, and then he took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

DOLLY really seemed very little altered by the fact of her engagement. It was true, when she reflected the first of October would make her a Countess, she grew rather grave, but in a general way she was just the same sunny-tempered child who had so long brightened Acacia Cottage.

Mr. Dyason appeared in good time, and saw the two Rose Delavals together. He promptly took the younger to his heart at once. He had managed the Dornton estates for years, and remembered poor, pretty Hilda, whom he assured Dolly was her own image.

"The first of October, at All Saints, Margaret-street, at nine o'clock," was the message he took back to Lord Dornton. "Miss Delaval alone accompanies her niece. I am to give the bride away, and both ladies hope you will allow the ceremony to be entirely of a private character!"

The Earl shrugged his shoulders.

"I hope it will be a fine day. If it's at all dark, I shall run the risk of marrying the aunt instead of the niece, for I am sure it's hard enough to see the difference at any time!"

Mr. Dyason started.

"I find not the slightest resemblance between them," he said, stiffly. "Miss Delaval may be a charming woman, but your future wife is a beauty!"

"I shouldn't have said so. Well, Dyason, have you settled everything or have you to make another journey to Acacia Cottage?"

"It would be a fruitless one. The cottage is to be deserted after to-morrow; Miss Delaval takes her niece to Westmoreland, where they remain until the first week in September, when they come to town to prepare for the wedding."

"This was not precisely true. Miss Delaval had talked before the lawyer of the beauties of Westmoreland, and also said she was going to

spend some months in the country, but there was no connection between the statements.

"Where shall we go, Dolly?" asked the kind aunt when Mr. Dyason had departed. "I want you to have a pleasant time, dear!"

"Not to Westmoreland!" said Dolly, who had been reading a society paper that day, which announced Lord Dornton would shortly lead to the hymeneal altar his beautiful and accomplished cousin, Rose Delaval; "not where anyone knows us!"

"Why not?"

Dolly blushed.

"I don't want to be pointed at as the girl who is going to be a countess, and Delaval is such an uncommon name. Couldn't we call ourselves something else? That's why I don't want to go to Westmoreland! I'd much rather be somewhere we had neither of us ever been before, and you know we need not think about money now!"

This was true. Lord Dornton had bequeathed five hundred pounds for the express purpose of purchasing a trousseau for his grandchild, and buying anything she might fancy.

The day after Dolly's consent to the engagement the money reached her in crisp banknotes, and the child decided a little of it might well be spent in making the last three months of her maiden life something to remember gladly.

Miss Delaval yielded—in point of fact she mostly did yield—so instead of that talked-of expedition to Brighton or Margate, the two Roses found themselves in a pretty cottage covered with roses in a lovely Yorkshire village, with Flamborough Head raising its lofty peak above them, and all the delights of Scarborough within easy reach.

It was charming! Miss Rose (for Dolly's whim had been carried out, and the tall-tale Delaval been dropped) and her niece hired a pretty pony carriage; they called round the head in a pleasure boat; they climbed the peak and saw the lighthouse; they went to Scarborough for a taste of gaiety; in fact, for two weeks their device of a summer habitation proved a brilliant success; then a telegram came from Dugdale Castle. The heir had returned suddenly, and was lying at the point of death. The Squire implored Rose Delaval to come to him.

Finding her aunt in tears, Dolly insisted on learning the cause. It came out then. She and George Dugdale had been plighted lovers once, their wedding-day fixed, when a woman who had been the curse of the young man's life, who had entrapped him into a marriage when he was a mere boy, and whom he had long believed dead—appeared upon the scene. The sorrowful romance was never published to the world.

George Dugdale went abroad; Rose Delaval buried her blighted hopes, and now he had come home and lay a-dying.

"You must go to him at once."

It was Dolly who spoke, and her eyes were wet with tears. Really, for a girl who did not believe in love, and meant to pass her life without it, she showed a great amount of sympathy for her aunt.

"But how can I leave you, or take you to such a house of sadness?"

"I shall stay here."

"Dolly!"

"I should only be in the way there, and I have been first with you so many years, auntie, I don't think I could bear to see myself second. I shall stay here."

"But at your age—alone?"

"I don't think harm could come to anyone that you know, auntie. Mrs. Marshall called yesterday, and you might commend me to her care if you really won't believe I can take care of myself."

Mrs. Marshall was the Rector's wife. She mostly patronised the tenants of Shell Cottage by a call, but she had felt drawn to Miss Rose and her niece the moment she saw them, and the call Dolly referred to had been meant in real friendship.

Moreover, the widowed landlady of Shell Cottage was a gentlewoman, so between them—her

and Mrs. Marshall—Dolly would not be neglected.

Miss Rose called at the Rectory and explained she was suddenly summoned to a friend's death-bed, and could not take Dolly. Would Mrs. Marshall kindly help the girl if any difficulty arose? And then, leaving fifty pounds in the Rector's hands for any sudden necessities that might arise, Rose Delaval, the elder, took a sobbing farewell of her darling, and set off for Appleby, hoping she might be in time for a parting word with her life's love.

It must be confessed Dolly felt very dull. She had never been alone in her life save for those three days following her last birthday, and solitude was not to her taste. It was a real comfort to her when Mrs. Marshall came in the second day after her aunt had left, and proposed she should spend the afternoon at the Rectory.

"We are very quiet people, but it will be better perhaps than a lonely evening," she said, kindly. And Dolly, who had never taken a meal in another person's house, since she left Westmoreland five years before, was quite elated, and accepted the invitation gratefully.

She looked a pretty picture, as she followed her hostess up the well-kept drive. And yet her toilet was simple to a degree—only a simple walking costume.

But for her tall, graceful figure she would have looked a child of ten. As it was, she seemed a mere girl; no one could ever have guessed from looking at her, that in a few weeks' time she was to be a countess.

"Henry!" said Mrs. Marshall to her husband; "this is Miss Rose. I thought it would be more cheerful for her to come to us than spend a lonely evening at Shell Cottage."

"I am delighted to see you, Miss Rose!" said the old man, with stately courtesy. "Ada, who do you think has come down to surprise us! My old friend and pupil, Kenneth Devreux."

Mrs. Marshall started.

"I thought he had come into a fortune, and all London had gone wild after him!"

"I don't think so. I told him we had heard romantic tales about him, but he looked so grave I had to leave off all attempts to question him. He is in the spare-room making a hasty toilet. I'll go and tell him you've come in."

Mrs. Marshall turned to Dolly with a quick explanation.

"Mr. Devreux is an old pupil of my husband's. He lived with us for about a year before he went to college, and we now love him dearly."

"How glad you must be he has come!"

She could not say any more, for the Rector and his guest came back. Mrs. Marshall greeted her favourite affectionately, and introduced him to Dolly.

It occurred to the young man that somewhere or other he had seen Miss Rose before. He could not explain the fact, but every feature of her face was familiar to him.

"Oh, no!" said Dolly, when he ventured to hint at this. "I am quite sure I never saw you before."

"It might have been abroad. I have been a sad wanderer—just a passing glimpse of you that you never knew of!"

Dolly shook her head.

"I have never been out of England, and I have only been in a train twice since I can remember. Aunt Rose hates travelling!"

The evening passed very pleasantly; they had tea in the pretty flower-scented garden, and then, when they went indoors, at Mrs. Marshall's request Dolly went to the piano and sang some pathetic old English ballads, which brought the tears to the eyes of the old couple as they listened.

"You must come again soon!" said the Rector's wife, as she wrapped her guest in a soft crimson shawl. "It has been such a treat to have you!"

"And to me to come!" said Dolly, simply. "It is more than five years since I went out to tea!"

"Have you forsworn the society of your fellow-creatures, then?" asked Kenneth Devreux, with a smile, as they passed out into the July night together—for he had substituted him-

self for the Rectory cook as Dolly's escort back to Shell Cottage.

"Oh, no! but we never had any friends after we went to London."

"You must have been very lonely!"

"No; I had my aunt."

"Is she with you at Shell Cottage?"

"Oh, no! she went away yesterday to see someone who is very ill."

"And left you all alone?"

"She could not help it."

"Don't you find it dull?"

"A little."

"Are you fond of boating? Would you let me take you for a row to-morrow?"

"I should like it dearly, but—"

He was annoyed at her hesitation.

She looked such a child—surely she has not pride enough to object to such a simple pleasure.

"But I am a stranger to you. Is that what you were going to say?"

"Oh, no, I never thought of that; I meant it didn't seem kind to Mrs. Marshall. She and the Rector are so pleased to have you, and it wouldn't be fair to take you away."

Kenneth smiled.

"Mrs. Marshall has a sewing-class on Friday afternoons, and the Rector writes his sermons, so I assure you, Miss Rose, I shall be reduced to a lonely expedition if you refuse me your society."

Dolly blushed and promised to be ready by three o'clock, forgetting his lordship the Earl of Dornton and his claims on her allegiance entirely.

"That is a pretty child," said Kenneth, carelessly, to the Rector, as they sat smoking later on that night.

"Very," said Mrs. Marshall, "and the aunt is an admirable woman. She subscribes most handsomely to all our charities, though she has been here hardly a fortnight."

"I wonder she cared to leave her niece alone."

"She couldn't help herself; she was afraid of infection if she took her with her, and Mrs. Marshall promised to have an eye to her. Dolly has been delicate, it seems, and Miss Rose did not like to send her back to their London home in this sultry weather. I think she was very wise. This fine Yorkshire air will make another creature of the child."

"She seemed so lonely I proposed to take her for a row to-morrow. I suppose we couldn't persuade Mrs. Marshall to come with us!"

The Rector laughed at the bare idea.

"Mrs. Marshall hasn't been on the water since we lived here. It's very kind of you to think of giving Miss Rose a pleasure, but I fear my wife won't share it."

"I suppose no one can say anything!"

The Rector stared.

"My dear fellow, this is not a place for scandal-mongers. The girl is a pure-minded innocent child, and you are an honest man; this will have to be a more spiteful village by far than it is before people remark on your spending an hour together without the vigilant eye of chaperon upon you."

Mr. Devreux agreed at once, and forthwith adopted the Rector's view; in fact, he put a most literal construction on Mr. Marshall's word, for instead of spending an hour with Dolly, it soon came that he passed all his leisure with her.

Miss Rose was still detained at her friend's death-bed. Dolly had become a sort of adopted child at the Rectory, and as Kenneth seemed like a son of the house it was hardly strange that the two young people were thrown a great deal together.

They went long solitary walks together; together they ascended Flamborough Head, then they played croquet in the Rectory garden, or took delicious sails on the German Ocean. Their amusements were innocent and varied, but always enjoyed in company, and Mrs. Marshall looked on complacently. To her it seemed only a boy and girl friendship, she thought it just an innocent acquaintance, and

but for her husband might never have felt a pang of alarm.

"Ada!" said the Rector, suddenly one day, "where's Kenneth?"

"Sketching on Flamborough Head, dear. He took his lunch, and will not be home till evening."

"And where's Dolly?" (the formal Miss Rose had been quite dropped at the Rectory long before this).

"She went too!"

Mr. Marshall put on his spectacles and looked grave at his wife.

"Ada, it seems to me, we've made an awful blunder."

"Heavy!"

"We've left these two as much together as though they were brother and sister. If ever young people had place, time and opportunity given to them for falling in love, you and I have given all these to Kenneth and little Dolly."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Marshall, but she looked troubled for all that. "Dolly is nothing but a child, Kenneth must be years older."

"Ten years or more I grant you, but, Ada, when I proposed to you, you didn't think fifteen years an insuperable barrier to our being lovers."

"And you think those two have fallen in love!"

"I hope not, but I am afraid; and if they had, I think a big portion of the blame is ours."

"What will Miss Rose say?"

"What will Kenneth's family say? His uncle might disinherit him."

"Perhaps they haven't done so," said poor Mrs. Marshall, who would persist in talking of falling in love, as though it were a tangible action which befell people at some particular moment, before which period they were safe, after which all was hopeless.

"I hope not."

"I'll talk to Dolly!"

"Pray don't!" said Mr. Marshall quickly.

"Let's hope the poor child doesn't suspect anything. I'll say a word to Kenneth to-night."

And he did, did it as cleverly as though he had been the most consummate actor, instead of a simple, kind old man.

"I heard from Miss Rose this afternoon, Kenneth; I expect Dolly found a letter too, when she got home, her aunt is coming back next week."

He looked at the young man keenly, and Kenneth felt uncomfortable.

"I think I shall have to leave you next week, Mr. Marshall. This has been a charming visit; I have enjoyed it enormously, I assure you."

"Small thanks to us. I fancy; hasn't Dolly been the chief charm of the time, Kenneth?"

Mr. Devereux grew white to the very lips. For one moment he hesitated, then he held up his head, and said, frankly,—

"She has; but on my word of honour I never suspected it till this moment. I feel ashamed of myself, but I'll repair the mischief as much as I can. I'll say good-bye to her to-morrow, and go back to London!"

"Poor little girl!"

"She doesn't know," said Kenneth, hoarsely. "I have spoilt my own life's happiness, but I have never said a word of my feelings. She can't know, poor child, that I love her!"

"But not well enough to marry her."

"I am engaged, man!"

Mr. Marshall rose, and was going to leave the room, a muttered imprecation on his lips, of which Kenneth caught but one word,—

"Scoundrel!"

"Hear me out," he pleaded. "My defence is weak enough, but at least listen to it. When my uncle died—"

"Do you mean he is dead? I had not the remotest idea of it!"

"He died last spring."

"Then you are free to please yourself!"

"I am not free, I am bound to marry a wife of his selection—or be penniless."

"And you consented?"

"I did. I had never seen a woman I could love; I thought it easy to pass my life without love. I consented."

"And your fiancée?"

"On that point we were agreed; she, too, did not believe in love. We resolved to be married and part at the church door—to trouble each other no more."

"And knowing this you could come here under a false name!"

"Spare me that reproach, Mr. Marshall, for it is undeserved. I am Kenneth Devereux. When I found you had not heard of my uncle's death I did not feel bound to tell you of it. I assure you I care very little for my honours. I was happier far in the old days, when I was plain Mr. Devereux."

"Anyway, you knew you were engaged to another woman when you made love to Dolly?"

"But I never did make love to her. Until you spoke to me to-night, I thought my feeling was friendship."

"Poor child!"

"I never meant to harm her."

"Then go away without seeing her again; let her believe all this was only friendship—if she can."

Kenneth promised, and he honestly meant to keep his word. But the next morning, wandering by the shore, he came upon Dolly seated on a rug, her eyes bent on the foaming ocean, her thoughts far away. In her hand she held a letter, and it was plain she had been crying.

Kenneth Devereux forthwith forgot his promise. He went up to the girl, and took her hand.

"Dolly, what is the matter?"

"Aunt Rose is coming home on Monday!" said Dolly, gravely, "and I am very glad!"

"You don't seem glad!"

"I am; I want to see her!"

"Then why have you been crying?"

"I don't know—at least, I mean it's nothing you can help!"

"Try me!"

And he sat down beside her, just as though that conversation with the Rector the night before had never been.

"You can't help it!" said Dolly, sadly; "only this is August, September will soon be here, and then October!"

Kenneth had reasons of his own for not desiring the arrival of October; but really he could not understand anyone else lamenting that it was the next month to September.

"But, Dolly, why do you worry over that? Of course October will be here soon, and that means winter; but spring will come back, and summer too!"

"I should like it to be always summer!" said Dolly, slowly. "I love the sunshine and the flowers, and this is such a pretty place. I have been so happy here!"

So had Kenneth, but he dared not tell her that; he only said soothingly,—

"Your aunt will bring you again—next year, perhaps—and then it will be just as pretty, and the flowers and the summer sunshine will be here waiting to welcome you!"

"You don't understand. I shall never come back here—I am going to be married in October!"

He had been able to contemplate leaving her, and giving his name to another woman; but he could not brook even the idea of Dolly herself being married, and not to him. She was such a child. He was sure her heart was not in the engagement.

"That is great news! And are you happy?"

"No! I am miserable!"

"Poor child!"

"You see," said Dolly, slowly, "I have never seen him!"

"Never seen the man you are going to marry?" exclaimed Kenneth. "You must be joking!"

"It is no joking matter! You see we were very poor, and auntie thought it would be such a good thing for me!"

"And is he fond of you?"

"Didn't I tell you he had never seen me! He is a very good man—at least auntie says so. Mr. Devereux don't you hate good people?"

"Yes!"

A long, long pause.

"You mustn't do it, Dolly. You are such a child! You don't know what a life you would be

choosing. You would make your future a long pain!"

"I know."

"You had better write to the fellow and break it off!"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I have promised to marry him, and I never broke my word in my life!"

"Dolly, would you despise anyone who broke their word?"

Dolly looked thoughtful.

"Wouldn't it be wrong of them?"

Kenneth's mind was quite made up now. He threw over Rose Delaval and wealth composedly. His future, henceforward, meant three hundred a-year and Dolly, if only she would agree to dismiss her unknown suitor.

"Supposing it was a promise which would make a man miserable to keep!"

"How?"

"I promised to marry someone I do not love—just as you did. Dolly, I am going to tell her that our marriage would be a wretched one, and I should make her miserable, so she must let me free. Can't you do the same?"

"But Aunt Rose!"

"Leave her to me."

"She doesn't know you!"

"Listen, Dolly. When I have got my freedom I shall come back and see your aunt. I shall tell her that I can give you no wealth or luxury, but I love you with all the strength of my heart. I think she will yield then, Dolly, and let me marry you."

"But—"

"But I have never asked you! I ask you now, sweetheart, in all earnestness, will you be my much-loved wife?"

"It's very wrong, you know!" confessed Dolly with a blush; "because we both belong to some one else. But I am sure I could never be happy with anyone but you!"

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THE LOST STAR.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WELL, we've had a capital tramp over the hills, but I can't say we've seen much for our pains," and Bessie Egerton stood still to scan the prospect, with both hands in her pocket.

"They've had a very good run, and the pace must have been tremendous. I suspect very few of them were in at the finish," rejoined her sister.

Ruby, who had sunk down on the stump of a tree, pulled out her watch.

"Half-past one!" she exclaimed, in horror; "and I promised to be home in time for luncheon!"

"Unless your home is very near, I fancy you have broken your promise. But, never mind, everything is excusable when out with the hounds," said Bessie, cheerfully, as she pulled her glove off, and fanned herself with it.

"Is it far to The Poplars, Sunnydale?"

"Whew!" with a loud whistle. "You had better come home and lunch with us, for you won't get to Sunnydale before dinner."

"Don't frighten her, Bessie," said the younger sister, who noticed the anxious look on Ruby's tired face. "If Miss Howard takes the short cut across the ford, it won't be so very far."

Ruby listened gratefully to her directions, and started off at a brisk pace, the way seeming doubly long and lonely because she missed their lively chatter.

It was so long since she had taken much exercise that she felt desperately tired; but she pushed on resolutely, fearing that Mrs. Wood would be getting really anxious about her.

A ploughed field is not the pleasantest place to walk in, especially if the ground be damp, and Ruby soon found that she was in danger of dragging half the field with her. She stopped

half-a-dozen times at least to free her soles from the heavy mud, and was thankful to reach the boundary hedge with her boots still left on her feet.

Pushing the branches aside, she was dismayed to see the steepest of banks which she must descend in order to get into the lane. Putting one foot out cautiously, she found that her skirts had caught on a broken stump. Turning to detach them, an aggressive briar seized upon her back hair and pulled down a long, bright curl. She put up her hand to replace it in a hurry, for she heard the sound of footsteps coming very near, and she did not wish to be found in such an undignified position.

Her hat was caught in a tangled wreath of withered briary—a gigantic cobweb came right across her face. She stepped on one side to escape from it, her feet slipped, and with the briars tearing at her dress, she descended helter-skelter into the outstretched arms of a man below.

In an instant she knew who it was, and her heart gave a bound as if it would leap from her breast, as with a whole summer of joy in his face, Lord Alverley clasped her tight.

"So I have found you at last, my own lost star!" he murmured, unsteadily, as he put the tangled curls away, and studied her every feature with eyes that had starved for a sight of them during an endless year.

"Let me go!" she said, faintly, overpowered by joy and fear.

"Never!" he cried, joyously. "Never will I let you out of my sight again, you Will-o'-the-wisp! Look at me! you have no curiosity to see if I am altered. Don't you know that I have been at death's door, all because you would not come to me! Don't you see that I am a perfect wreck!"

She drew back and looked up at him with a smile. The short, black hunting-coat and white cords were exceedingly becoming. He was dressed with almost dandified care; the bunch of violets in his button-hole were just the correct size, and his refined face had never looked so handsome before as now, when flushed with excitement and happiness.

"I never saw anything less like a wreck. You positively look in blooming health!"

"Who wouldn't after such a run as we have had to-day! It was glorious whilst it lasted, but nothing to this as a flesh," laying his hand on her shoulder. "How I cursed my luck at having to fall out because Vixen had dropped a shoe! My man with the second mount was nowhere to be seen, so I've had to lead her for I don't know how many miles till I could find a forge!"

"There is one at the end of the lane where it turns round the corner. I saw the smoke as I was coming across the field. Let us walk on for a few hundred yards and we shall come to it."

"No! I don't want to talk to you with half-a-dozen blacksmiths to look on. Sit down on that stile," pointing with his hunting-crop to one that was nearly hidden in the opposite hedge, "and I will be with you in a minute. Stay, you will promise not to give me the slip. If you won't," he added, quickly, "I'll keep you here for ever!"

"I won't go till you come back."

"And then we go together."

She shook her head, but he went off with a confident smile, patting Vixen's neck, with the bridle rein thrown over his arm.

Ruby leant her head on her hand, lost in thought. A team of horses passed, led by a ploughboy. He cracked his whip and whistled with a perfectly vacuous expression of countenance, unconscious of the bright eyes that watched him with an abstracted gaze.

"How shall I convince him that our marriage is impossible? How shall I be able to make him go his way, and leave me to go mine?"

Even as she was thinking how to get rid of him, he came back and sat down on the highest step of the stile on which her feet were resting.

"My boots are muddy," she said, with a smile.

"Never mind, I like it," looking up into her

face with eyes that positively shone with happiness.

"Do you know that I ought to be miles away from here, eating luncheon with an old lady?" "No, I don't! I know that it is quite the right thing for you to be here, eating luncheon with an old friend. I have nothing but these to offer you," throwing a tin of sandwiches into her lap, "but we will share them together."

The sandwiches were of the most delicate description—thin slices of French roll, filled with *pâté de foie gras* and potted game. Ruby was too tired and excited to be hungry, but she ate two or three to please him, and just put her lips to his flask of cherry brandy.

"And so you have been living with an old lady in Berkshire, whilst detectives have been scouring the country for you!"

"And you?"

"I've done nothing but long for you, and hate every place I came to because you weren't there."

"And now that you have found me—?"

"I shan't let you go."

"Has the star been found?"

"Curse the star! What has that to do with you and me?"

"Something, I think!"

He changed his place suddenly, and sitting down by her side, slipped his arm gently but resolutely round her waist.

"Let bygones be bygones," he said, softly.

"The only question you have to answer is whether you love me now, as you did, I could swear, a year ago."

She turned as white as the cloud which was floating far above her head, and clasped her hands together as if in silent prayer for strength.

"Ruby, answer me. Do you love me?"

No answer, but she was trembling from head to foot. Taking silence for assent he stooped and pressed his eager lips on hers, for the first time in his life. For an instant she yielded to the old irresistible charm; and then she sprang down to the ground and stood before him, white and agitated, but inexpressibly lovely in her struggle for composure.

"Lord Alverley, be generous as you have always been. Do you wish me to loathe myself more than any other being on earth? Do you wish me never to have one moment's peace of mind? Do you wish me to live in constant fear of what my fellow-creatures may think or say?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Then let me be as I am now—lost to the world, but peaceful, content, and happy."

"Happy! Can you tell me that you are happy?" he asked, quickly, "happier without me, than with me?"

"I can!" she said, softly, but distinctly.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," and he drew himself up with a certain dignity of resentment. "I would not disturb your happiness for the world. I meant to add to it—not destroy it." There was a miserable pause, during which he picked a straw out of the hedge and chewed it savagely, frowning as if his thoughts were very bitter. "Evidently Berkshire has consolations of which I never dreamt, and my appearance to-day was an unfortunate interruption—or intrusion, shall I say! for which I apologise. No doubt it will easily be forgotten by you, and if I remember it," with a sigh, "you will not know it, so it won't matter."

She stood as if turned to stone—neither speaking nor moving.

"If you will allow me I will escort you home, wherever that may be," still perfectly courteous, though his heart was nearly bursting with anger. She shook her head, the power of speech seemed gone.

Looking round with a great effort, a minute afterwards, she found he was gone.

Then the necessity for restraint no longer existing, she sank down on the bank, amongst the weeds and briars, and cried aloud in passionate pain. It was too hard. She had wanted him to go, but not like this—not like this, with the thought that having loved him once, she could change like the wind, and care for anyone else in his place. Oh! for six feet of ground in the

corner of some churchyard where she could lie in peace! The path of duty seemed to scorch her feet, and tired of struggling, she would fain be at rest. Could she rest even in the grave, leaving the sting of sorrow in the breast of one who had always been kind and tender and generous to her. She pushed back her hair, and looked up with wild longing in her eyes.

He was standing before her once again—pale, but perfectly composed; only his voice was slightly hoarse, when he told her that a carriage was waiting round the corner, to carry her wherever she wished to go.

"Oh! why have you taken the trouble!" as she rose to her feet.

He stooped to brush a cobweb and some dried leaves off her dress.

"It was no trouble, I got a boy to fetch it."

Side by side they walked down the lane, neither speaking a word, till the silence became oppressive. He handed her into the fly, then drew back, saying—

"Perhaps you would like to tell the driver your address!"

"No; you tell him: 'The Poplars, Sunnydale.'"

"The Poplars, Sunnydale," he repeated, slowly. How he had longed to know it as he tossed from side to side on his fevered bed, and now the knowledge seemed of little use!

"Good-bye," and she stretched out her hand with a wistful smile.

"I am coming with you—on the box."

"Not on the box," she entreated. "Perhaps you can tell me many things I am dying to know. Have you seen my sister?"

"Yes," with a slight smile, as he took his place on the back seat, and slammed the door.

"But what about your horse?"

"They have promised to take care of her till my return."

As they drove along the country roads, he told her about Violet's attempted elopement, and how the marriage had been frustrated by his brother at his own instigation. Ruby listened breathlessly, asking question after question. He told her all he could think of to interest her, but after awhile he asked if they had nearly reached Sunnydale.

"Yes; that is—the church amongst the trees."

Then he put his fingers into his waistcoat pocket, and drew forth the ring which she knew so well.

"I have kept it here ever since," he said, gravely, "but it is no use giving it back to you now, as you will have someone else to look after you. But if anything happens to me, and I send it you, I suppose your husband would let you come!"

"I shall certainly come!"

The tears were brimming her eyes, and she turned away that he might not see them.

"I have a selfish fancy that I should like to have an angel near me when I die. What are you looking at—my violets! They are dead, or I would offer them to you!" taking them out of his button-hole.

She held out her hand involuntarily, for each of those limp little flowers would be ten times more to her than its weight in gold. He placed them in it with a slight smile—then his face and manner changed.

"Ruby," he said, earnestly, "when I stole that kiss I meant no impudence; I thought you were mine—really mine. But just as a remembrance of 'and lang syne' you will let me touch your hand." He pressed it to his lips, and wondered why it shook so. "You are not deceiving me—you honestly wish me to go, and forget you if I can?"

"Yes—yes!" she answered, hurriedly, and as the carriage drew up at The Poplars sprang out, without waiting for his assistance.

He looked after her as she disappeared into the hall, with wonder and anger in his eyes, and then stepped slowly into the fly.

"I might have been a better man if she had stuck to me; but *voilà la galère!*"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mrs. WOOD was much perturbed at Miss Howard's not returning from her morning walk till four o'clock in the afternoon; and when she came into the drawing-room, after divesting herself of her hat and jacket, with heavy eyes and colourless cheeks, the old lady made up her mind that this should be the very last hunting excursion in which she should allow her companion to join.

She said as much to the Squire when he came in for his cup of tea; but he pooh-poohed her anxiety, and said a slip of a girl like Ruby Howard would be all the better for a run like that.

Whilst this conversation was going on downstairs, Ruby was lying on her bed with a nervous headache. As she tossed from side to side, unable to find rest in any position, she kept asking herself if she had been a fool—a right-down fool—or little less than a saint!

Marriage with Lord Alverley was as impossible now as it had ever been. She was still in a dependent position—still utterly penniless—still under the suspicion of a slur. Lord Chester would not tolerate such a match for his son; and Lord Alverley himself—though she loved him all the more for his utter contempt of these drawbacks—if she gave into his wish, would wake some day to find he had made a great mistake.

She could have been content—yes, content—knowing that she had done right, if only she had not been obliged to seem faithless, in order to persuade him to go. It was so terribly hard to help him to un-love her, when his love was the one anchor to which she had always been able to cling in the roughest storms of life. Now she must bend to the blast in resigned submission, for it was worse than useless to try to make head against it.

Time passed on, spring came quickly on the heels of winter, and summer followed, sprinkling the earth with beauty and gladness. On a glorious morning in June, Ruby caught up a large shady hat and strolled across the lawn, in search of flowers for the vases.

Bees were humming on every side, stooping every now and then to sip the honey from lily or rose. It seemed to the sorrowful girl wending her way through life with quiet patience, as she watched the play of the insects, the volatile butterfly—loving and leaving quick as the seconds flew—the ardent bee, staying just long enough to gather all the sweetness on its way—as if everything in inanimate Nature had its love and its lover, except herself.

She picked a spray of honeysuckle, and fastened it in the front of her dress, pricking her finger with the pin.

"Fancy all that pain and trouble over a trumpety flower like that!" said a cheery voice behind her, and looking round she saw the Squire with a great bunch of dewy roses in his hand. "See what I have brought you!"

"Oh! how lovely!" burying her face in them with keen appreciation. "Are they all for me?"

"Everyone of them. I picked them myself, because I knew you were always hankerlog after them; and I thought they were better given than stolen—oh!"

"Now I shall know what you expect of me; and I'll take care you are not disappointed," with a saucy look up into his face.

"So long as you come to 'The Beeches,' I don't much mind what you come for. The house seems like a barn when you're not in it. I think," with a good-natured chuckle, "I shall start a companion for myself, and ask Mrs. Wood if she isn't tired of here. What do you say to that?"

"You are very rude to suggest that she could be!"

"How should you like to come and live with the old man?" putting his rough hand under her chin, and rubbing it softly. "To make his tea, and be growled at if it wasn't strong enough—to have to listen to his endless yarns, and never wink an eyelash lest he should be cross—to have to talk about turnips and scientific farming, dogs and horses, and shortbuns, and

never to know what it was to have a will or a way of your own! How should you like it—eh!"

"Not at all!"

"Oh, you wouldn't; then I won't ask you. Lucky I didn't mention it to the old lady. Ruby, child!" changing his tone, and laying his hand upon her shoulder. "I don't like the idea of the daughter of my dear old friend being buffeted about the world as if she had only sprung out of the workhouse. It's time for you to have a home of your own, and I want to know when it's coming! How about that young fellow who saw you back from your hunting—why did you send him about his business!" fixing his penetrating eyes on her tell-tale blushes, as she hung her head.

"When the pocket is empty"—and she tried to speak lightly—"it is well that the heart should be empty too!"

He frowned.

"Absurd! I never heard such nonsense in my life! When I was a youngster, a face like yours would have been enough to fill my heart—my pocket—and my whole life as well. Call him back as soon you can, and send him to me; he shall have your pretty face, and something to put into his pocket as well. There now, cheer up! Alex. Mackinlay's word is as good as a bond. I must be off, or the lazy rascals will be shirking their work!"

Waving his hand, he opened a gate which led into the paddock, where the buttercups were shining among the rich long grass.

"Have you got your umbrella?"

Ruby ran to the gate to see if he had it in his hand, for he was in the habit of using a red one, as large as an ordinary-sized tent.

"No, I left it somewhere in the stables—like an old fool!"

"I will fetch you mine, if you'll wait a minute."

"Yours!" in derision. "A nonsensical little thing, which would only cover the tip of my nose. No, no, it's not my complexion I'm thinking of; so when I come across a cabbage leaf I'll stick it in my hat."

"Don't forget, because the sun is like a furnace!" she said, anxiously.

"A mere flea-bite to what I've been accustomed to—where they can roast a slice of beef, and boil a drop of water, in less than five minutes by setting it out in the sun."

With a nod of his head, the Squire walked off, a thorough picture of an old-fashioned country gentleman, in his tight, leathern gaiters, and short brown coat, as he skirted the edge of the paddock, where some thorn trees cast a welcome shade over the grass.

And Ruby stood still to look after him, shading her eyes with her hand, because she had taken off her hat to fill it with his roses.

With the flowers in her hand, and the sunshine resting on her bright, brown hair, turning it into gold, she looked like an impersonation of the beauty and freshness of the lovely summer's morning. But her eyes were very wistful as they followed the Squire's burly figure over the crushed buttercups; and she had half a mind to run after him, and tell him how grateful she was to him for all his kindness.

"But why stop him now! I can do it just as well this evening."

And with this reflection she hurried across the scorched lawn, and gathered the rest of the flowers hastily, so as to make up for lost time.

But when she picked a rosebud—she thought she would give it to the Squire for his button-hole—and when she pricked her fingers, she smiled to think how he would laugh at her carelessness.

Two hours later she was sitting at luncheon with Mrs. Wood.

The windows were wide open, but every blind was drawn down to keep out the sun, and the dining-room was, in consequence, reduced to a state of semi-darkness.

This seemed so depressing to Ruby that she asked permission to draw up the blind of the

western window, where the sun could not penetrate so early in the day.

During the rest of luncheon she kept looking out at the small amount of view, with an unconscious feeling of expectation.

"Are you expecting the postman, my dear?" asked Mrs. Wood, with a smile; "because, you know, he never comes round so soon as this."

"No, I never have any letters," with a small sigh. "And what a comfort it is! I do pity the poor business-men who are always pursued by them wherever they go. It seems so hard that they should not have their holidays unspoilt."

"Yes, but it cannot be helped—the delay of a week's post in some cases may mean the loss of a fortune. I knew a case—"

"Mrs. Wood, there's somebody running!" and Ruby started nervously to her feet.

"Well, my dear, I have known people run before," said the old lady, composedly taking up her spectacles to inspect something on her plate.

"He is talking to the gardener, and pointing—"

"Depend upon it," and Mrs. Wood turned towards the window, "they have let the sheep into the paddock again, and my best grass is being eaten up as fast as it can!"

"Shall I go and see!" and Ruby, unable to account to herself for the excessive anxiety she felt, pushed aside her chair without waiting for the answer, and ran out, breathless with eagerness, through the open window into the glaring sunshine.

"What is it?" with eager eyes fixed on the boy's pale face.

The gardener, a respectable-looking, elderly man, shook his head, and said,—

"Don't 'ee be frightened, Miss!"—which, of course, terrified her exceedingly; whilst the boy, with a great gulp, as if he were swallowing his tears, pointed across the shining meadows to the road beyond, where a small procession was seen carrying some heavy burden slowly towards The Beeches. "It's the Squire, mum. They are bringing of him home!"

Ruby pressed her hand to her heart, and turned so cold that her teeth chattered in the scorching sun.

"What has happened! Was it an accident?"

"A sunstroke, they say. But he's awful bad; as near dead as I ever saw," rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand.

Her mind reverted instantly to everything that would be needed in such an emergency.

"A doctor!" she said, hoarsely; "has he been sent for?"

"Aye! He's been sent for, but they say it will be all up with him before he gets to the house."

Mrs. Wood had come out and was standing on the gravel-path, wringing her hands.

"I must go!" said Ruby, pantingly. "I must see him before—"

She would not finish her sentence, but flew like a wild thing down the short shrubbery, across the road, up the avenue of fine old beeches to the stately house which had been Alex. Mackinlay's desolate home.

She looked round the hall with dazed eyes. Trophies of the chase were hung on every side. There was the hunting-crop which he would never use again; the horn—the blinding tears came into her eyes, she could see no more. The house seemed empty, for all the servants had poured out of it at the first news of the disaster to their master.

How long she waited she never knew, but it seemed as if a whole year had passed whilst she was standing alone in the old hall, waiting for that which she dreaded.

The sunshine, the twittering of the birds, the buzz of playful insects, all seemed as if they ought to stop when the shadow of coming death was standing on the threshold. Their cheerfulness was a mockery, and jarred upon her grief-stricken heart.

Surrounded by a mournful train of servants and tenants, they brought the Squire home, and laid him on the sofa in the library. He had endeared himself in his rough way to all his de-

pendents, and stifled sobs were heard on every side, as young and old were grieving that they would see his kindly face no more.

Suddenly the heavy eyes opened, and rested with a glance of fond recognition on Ruby's troubled face.

"Child! you wouldn't come to me!" in a low, weak voice, with a tremulous motion of his hand, as if in search of hers. "But I've not forgotten you. Care for the horses, and don't—the last words were lost.

Bending over him as his lips moved once more, she just caught the whisper, "Lay me by her side, and Heaven have mercy!" Then the tired eyes closed and he seemed to sleep, as the girl he had grown so fond of knelt down and prayed with her whole heart that Heaven might receive his departing soul.

The doctor hurried in a few minutes later, but Alex. Mackinlay's spirit had gone to the One who gave it!

They laid him in the churchyard by the side of the wife from whom he had been so long parted; and when his will was read out in the library after the funeral, it was found, that with the exception of a few legacies to servants and old tenants, he had left all he possessed to the daughter of his old friend, Sir Robert St. Hellers, now passing under the name of Ruby Howard.

It made a great sensation in the county, and the heiress of The Beeches soon discovered that she might have as many friends as she liked. But what was the money to her unless she could share it with the only man she had ever loved!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN Lord Alverley arrived in London, after his unexpected meeting and unsatisfactory parting with Ruby St. Hellers, he was in a towering passion. Too much of a gentleman ever to show temper to a woman, it had only grown in strength because of the strong curb he had been obliged to put upon it, and it showed itself in an utter recklessness of appearances, which surpassed the follies of the past. He threw himself into every form of dissipation which could help him to drive her image from his memory.

Puinging heavily on the Derby and the Oaks, he lost a heap of money, and had recourse to the Jews to help him out of his difficulties. Of course they only increased rather than diminished his entanglements; and when he applied to his father for an advance, Lord Chester simply replied,—

"Don't be a fool any longer; marry Miss Dayncourt, and let me hear no more of your want of money!"

He refused, however, to flirt with Imogen Dayncourt for the purpose of keeping his creditors quiet, although he had got into the habit of frequenting her mother's house in Eaton-square pretty often.

One evening when he had dropped in after a very slow political dinner, Miss Dayncourt invited him into the small conservatory at the back of the drawing-room, to see a new specimen geranium. Thoroughly bored and disgusted with life in general, he was in a mood ripe for any mischief, and his eyes shone with a sudden fire beneath their drooping lashes.

After he had declared the geranium a fraud, Miss Dayncourt sank down on a low velvet seat, and moved her dress so that he might take the place beside her. He did as she intended and leaned his arm on the back of it, looking down at her majestic beauty without a scrap of admiration in his glance. Her style was distasteful to him, and her metallic voice grated on his ears.

She remained silent for a while, playing with the variegated leaves of a creeper, feeling that his eyes were upon her, and thinking that her present half-reclumbent position showed off her personal charms to advantage.

Suddenly she remarked,—

"That *protégé* of yours, Miss St. Hellers, what has become of her? She came to a bad end—did she not?"

"If she had been a *protégé* of mine, she

might," speaking very slowly, and with a slight frown; "but, fortunately for her, she would have nothing to say to me. What could have put such an absurd idea—excuse me, but it was so truly absurd—into your head?"

"Yourself, and a romantic story some one told me. Why you nearly risked losing your arm by flying down to Chester Chase!"

"So I am forbidden to go and see my father and mother!" with raised eyebrows.

"Not at all! but you cannot hope to blind me when circumstances are so dead against you."

"What circumstances?" with an air of indifference.

"Bobby Grenville, my cousin, you know, met an evening train at Paddington on one occasion, and saw a charming tableau as he stood upon the platform!" smiling maliciously. "There you were, in a fainting state, with the loveliest girl imaginable, as he said, bending over you!"

"Was it you?" very quietly. "You know I had my eyes shut so I couldn't see."

"You humbug! What was she doing when you opened them?"

"Nothing was there but the hairy visage of Phillips—useful certainly, but not romantic! The next time I faint, I will do it with one eye open."

"Do; and if I am there I will pour a little eau de Cologne into it. But tell me, why is she under a cloud?"

"For the same reason as the sun—she means to come out soon and surprise us."

"But what has she done?"

"Engaged herself to be married, I believe. Is that a crime?"

"Not to you!" breathlessly, something in his manner striking her as strange.

"No. I wish to Heaven she had!" with sudden vehemence.

"What! an insignificant little governess, who left your father's house in such a hurry that there were all sorts of queer stories about her!" she exclaimed, with sparkling eyes.

He rose to his feet and looked down at her, with such contempt in his half-closed eyes as stung her to the quick.

"Poor child! After all she is not insignificant enough to escape a woman's spite!"

"It is not spite—only facts are facts!"

"Facts distorted become the most mischievous of fictions," he said, sternly. "Miss St. Hellers left Chester Chase because, I am afraid, my people were not altogether kind to her. I think Clem was a little jealous of her; and my father—"

—with a shrug of his shoulders—"was, as usual, prejudiced. But I heard him myself beg her to stay; and my mother and the children were in tears."

"And you!" with a little scornful laugh.

The laugh roused him to sudden passion. His eyes glittered as he answered, haughtily,—

"If you are curious to know, I will tell you. I followed her to the station—and asked her to be my wife!"

She bit her lip, and flushed crimson.

"And perhaps you will tell me that she refused you!"

"She did!"

"But why! It would have been a splendid match for her!"

"Yes!" he said, slowly, but with concentrated bitterness, "a fair enough match, if Alverley himself had been left out of the bargain!"

"Some people would rather have it—with- not without," and she looked up at his worn, but still fascinating features, with a softening glance.

"Some might, but not an angel without one spot!"

With a low bow he left her abruptly, and walked out of the room, and down the stairs with a hurried step.

"Ruby! Ruby!" he cried, though in a voiceless appeal to the silent stars. It could not be that she was lost to him for ever. Surely she had never loved a new friend down in Berkshire better than himself! It was not likely—scarcely possible, indeed. He had seen the love-light in her eyes the day that she passed him at the door when she was leaving the Chase, and again when he had caught her in his arms, when she

was slipping down the bank into that thrice-blessed lane. Perhaps after all, she was deceiving him for his good—as she might fancy. It was just like her own unselfish nature to sacrifice herself again and again.

A gleam of hope darted through his heart, and the next morning, at an unusually early hour, he started for the peaceful village of Sunnydale.

He drove straight to The Poppars, and leaving the fly at the gate, walked quickly up the gravel-drive, and knocked at the front door. Every blind was down, and a presentiment of failure depressed his spirits. He was not surprised at receiving no answer; but the gardener came hobbling round the corner and asked him what he wanted.

"Can you tell me where Miss St. Hellers is?" slipping some money into the old man's horny hand.

"Never heard the name, sir. Our lady is away from home, visiting, and she calls herself Mrs. Wood!"

"Yes! but there was a young lady living with her not long ago. Surely you can't have forgotten her?"

"Oh, aye, a young lady—a sort of governess or companion!"

"Yes—yes!" impatiently, tapping the gravel with his cane.

"But she is a grand lady now," Lord Alverley's heart sank—"with horses and carriages of her own—mistress of The Beeches, as fine a place as you would see, this side of Berkshire."

"Ah! when did it happen?" thinking of the imaginary wedding.

"As near as I can mind me, nigh upon a month ago," alluding to the Squire's death. "It took many of us by surprise, but she's a real lady now, and as rich as—the Pope!"

"And what is her name?" hoarsely.

"Howard! If you have a wish to see her I'll but five minutes walk, and I'll be glad to show you the way, sir."

Alverley looked at the distant gables, and shuddered.

"Thanks; I'm in a hurry!"

With a slight nod he walked slowly down to the gate; and getting into the fly, told the coachman to drive back to the station.

His friend, Lord Fielding, with whom he had been staying on that memorable day when Vixen dropped her shoe, had deserted Berkshire for Rotten Row and Hurlingham; and his love for Ruby was too sincere to make him wish—at present at least—to appear as a marplot in the midst of her newly-found happiness.

So he hurried back to town with useless haste, whilst the old gardener wondered every time he scratched his head. "What an odd sort of cove the gentleman must be to go off so quick 'cos he heard a young lady was rich! A few shiners in the pocket in a general way made the sweet-heart stick a bit the closer."

Mrs. Howard, of The Beeches, Sunnydale! How strange it seemed to think that his own little Ruby had settled down as the wife of some country squire, who probably had no idea beyond shortness and horses.

She said she was happy, so he was bound to believe it; but there was something very peculiar about the whole affair, for she had almost sworn that she would not be the wife of any man till the lost star was traced.

Why was this Mr. Howard to be an exception to the rule? Was he so surpassingly fascinating that all her steadfast resolutions had broken, like egg-shells, before his irresistible power? He must be a new-comer at any rate, because his name had not once been mentioned by Fielding.

Lord Alverley speculated thus, as he sat in the second row of the stalls at the Alhambra, with his eyes abstractedly fixed on a new and marvellous ballet.

When the dancing was over, he strolled behind the scenes to look for a friend. Being in no humour for talking nonsense, even with the fairest of the *coryphées*, and not being able to discover the man he was in search of, he turned away, with the intention of leaving the theatre, when a pretty girl, robed in airy garments of light and sparkle, tapped him on the arm with a silver wand.

"Lord Alverley, I think!"
 "At your service," he answered, with a smile, looking down with evident admiration at her baby face.

"Do you remember Anna Gower?" hastily, as if she had no time to wait.

"No! does she dance as charmingly as you do!"

"I don't know," indifferently. "You mayn't have seen her, as she belongs to the last row but one."

"Then if I never saw her, how could I possibly remember her!" with raised eyebrows.

"Not here, but in your own home. She was a servant at Chester Chase; and I thought you knew her very well. She's right down mad about you!"

"Ah! I know. There was a good-looking girl—rather Jewish, with heavy dark eyes. Mad about me! That's very kind of her, for I don't remember ever speaking to her in my life. How long has she taken to this sort of thing!" with a glance in the direction of the stage.

"About a year I think; but she was never good at it, and she can't bear being scolded. Now she's very ill, poor thing—dying—and if you want to see her, there is no time to be lost."

"Want to see her!" his eyes opening wide with astonishment. "I assure you I haven't the smallest desire; but if she is ill, and in want of funds"—putting his hand into his pocket where coins were rather scarcer than they used to be—"perhaps you will be kind enough—"

"Nothing of the sort!" and she stamped her foot impatiently. "She doesn't want your money, but yourself. I think she has got something weighing upon her mind about a governess she was jealous of, and got into mischief."

An instantaneous change came over his listless face.

"Where does she live?"

She mentioned the name of a street in the neighbourhood of Covent-garden, adding—

"If you are a Christian you will go to her at once. Good gracious, there's the bell!"

"One moment! When can I see her?"

"To-night, she is alive—to-morrow, she may be—!" With an expressive shrug of her shoulders she fluttered away, and was lost amongst a crowd of dancers.

"Too bad of you, Alverley, and she's out-and-out the prettiest of the lot!" cried Lord Fielding, slapping him on the back.

"Keep your chaff for to-morrow. I'm off!" and, adding the action to the word, Lord Alverley nodded, and disappeared with a ceremony that surprised his friend.

"Something's up!" he muttered, as he lounged against a painted tree, with his hands in his pocket. "But I'm hanged if I can guess what it is. I never saw him walk so fast before!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

In a miserable lodging not far from Leicester-square a girl lay at the point of death. Her large eyes, shining with the unnatural lustre of fever, were fixed upon the pale, aristocratic face of the young Viscount, with a passionate intensity of expression which revealed the secret love she had so long cherished in the depths of her wild and foolish heart. It was a madness, and it brought her to this!

"And you saw this man at Chester Chase, on the day that the diamonds were missing?" said Lord Alverley, speaking very slowly, in order that she might understand him better.

"Yes! Time after time he begged and prayed of me, to let him come and see me in the house; and that day, when most of the gentry and half the servants were out, I let him in by the side door. We was just talking together in the passage, when I heard Mrs. Nicholson coming; and afraid of the scolding she was sure to give me, I shut him up in the housemaid's closet, on the stairs. When I came back—for she kept me a long time, a-grumbling about the dusting—he was gone!"

"And you never saw him again?"

Anna had sunk back on her pillow, her breath came in stertorous gasps, and the drops of utter exhaustion gathered on her forehead.

Moved with compassion for her blighted girlhood, and dreadfully afraid lest she should die with her story uncompleted, Lord Alverley looked round for some restorative; but there was neither eau-de-Cologne nor sal-volatile to be found on the rickety table—only a little water in a dirty glass.

Wiping the glass with his delicate pocket-handkerchief, he put it to her lips. She drank with feverish eagerness, and seemed revived. Putting her hand to her forehead, with a dazed look, she tried to recover the thread of her thoughts.

"You never saw him again!" repeated Lord Alverley.

"I looked high and low for him, till I was in a terrible fright, and at last I found him coming out of the Countess's bed-room, with his hand inside his coat. I asked what business he had up there, and tried to get him down the back-stairs; but he broke away from me, and stood outside the schoolroom door, listening. 'I hear her voice!' he said, over and over again, quite daft-like. I took him by the arm, and dragged him away, and glad enough I was to shut the door behind him!"

"And, knowing this, you kept it back, and let an innocent girl be suspected in his place!"

"Was she innocent? I saw her there, at the door of my lady's room—leastways, coming from it—with my own eyes!" sitting up in her eagerness, and dragging an old black shawl over her shoulders.

"She was not there!"—very sternly—"I know it for a certainty. Don't you believe me!"

"Aye, I believe you," wearily; "if you said I was a good girl, I'd try to think it true!"

"You will be good," gently, "if you do your best to repair your fault. What could have made you wish to harm an angel like Miss St. Hellers?"

Although so near the point of death the evil passions which had been so long cherished in the girl's untutored breast flashed from her eyes.

"I hate her!" she said, with clenched teeth.

"You hate her!" in surprise, as he drew back with sudden aversion.

"Oh, don't look at me like that!" and she clutched at his sleeve with eager fingers, "don't, now—oh! quick, let me tell you all—before I go. They told me you were ill, and then you came to the theatre. You would not look at me—but I watched you growing thinner and sadder as the time went on—and I knew it was all along of her"—Lord Alverley started—"and the thought came into my mind that I could help you, so I got Fred to show me his treasures—such a heap of queer things—and amongst them was my lady's star, shining so awful bright, as if it was a big eye watching me."

Here she stopped and panted for breath.

"I've thought of it all—you must get a star made of glass, just like it, and then you must take it with you, and say I sent you to look at his pretty things. Then you can take my lady's star, and slip the other in its place!"

"I see!" with a grave nod. "Where is he to be found?"

"Just round the corner, No. 29."

There was a pause, during which she fixed her eyes once more on Alverley's face with a haunting stare.

"When you have made it right," hoarsely, "shall you marry her?"

"No," in a low, sad voice; "she is married already."

A spasm of joy flitted across the girl's wasted features.

He rose from his seat.

"All this ought to be put down in black and white. Shall you have any objection to signing a deposition, if I ask my lawyer to call on you to-morrow?"

"To-morrow! Oh, where shall I be to-morrow?"

And with a convulsive shudder, she hid her face in the tattered shawl.

Lord Alverley, careless man of the world as he was, scarcely knew what to say; but he bowed his head reverently, and muttered,—

"In Heaven's hands, my poor girl!"

"And—and you won't curse me for what I've done!" with earnest entreaty in her eyes.

"I shall bless you for what you have done this day!"

"Then lay your hand upon my head, and bless me now!"

"My blessing is worth nothing," he said, gravely; but he laid his hand upon her rough black locks, and looked pitifully and tenderly into her eager face. His touch seemed to soothe her ruffled spirit, and she lay back with closed eyes. Suddenly she opened them.

"No harm must come to Fred. He is daft—quite daft—and means no harm to others."

"He shall be taken care of, that I promise you. Now, good night! Have you had a doctor?" looking round the bare room, compassionately.

"No; he couldn't cure me, and I didn't care to live! If I might have followed you, like a dog, wherever you went, it would have been different. I wanted nothing from you—only to see your face as I see it now, with the kindest smile in the world. Oh, Heaven! but it's hard to die!" with a sudden moan.

"My poor child, think of Heaven. I am not worth a thought. Can I find your landlady anywhere? I want to speak to her."

"If you find her she'll be tipsy; so whatever you have got to say, you had better tell it to me," looking up with falling eyes into the face that had been like a wandering star in her life, and led her fancy astray.

"Only this," he said, hurriedly, as he deposited some money on the table. "I want you to have all you want—doctor's medicines, creams and jellies—whatever you seem to fancy."

"You are kind!" with a piteous sigh, "but I shall be gone to-morrow!" She laid her hand on her heart, whilst her lips turned ashen grey. "Say you've been a good girl, Anna, and let me have your hand."

He gave her his hand with a pitying smile and pressed it to her burning lips. Then he stooped, and, moved with sudden pity, touched her forehead with his moustaches.

A radiant look shot across the girl's handsome face.

"You've been a good girl, Anna," he said, softly, and she seemed to hang upon the words. Then she turned over on her side, with a smile upon her lips, as he walked slowly across the room, and went out of the door.

On the stairs he met the landlady, not quite as tipsy as usual, and gave her some directions for Anna's comfort, which she promised to obey, being much impressed by the aspect of her lodger's late visitor.

The next morning he went down to Lincoln's Inn, and asked the solicitor to get Anna's deposition signed as soon as possible; and then drove off to Scotland-yard to get a warrant for the arrest of Frederick Godson, which was not to be used except in case of absolute necessity.

Two policemen in plain clothes watched the house during the day, and when it was dark Lord Alverley, disguised in a discarded coat of Phillips', and with a loose handkerchief round his neck, hiding every scrap of snow-white linen, dismissed his hansom at the corner; and walking slowly down the street, with half-closed eyes, which saw everything at a glance, rang the bell at No. 29, and asked for Mr. Godson.

A slatternly maid, with curl-papers in her hair, opened the door, and said that Godson was to be found in the "two pair back."

Snelling to himself at these curt directions, Lord Alverley groped his way up a dusty staircase, and knocking his forehead against an unman door, proceeded to rap on it with his stick.

"Come in, can't you, without all that row?" cried an impatient voice from the inside. The invitation was readily accepted, and Lord Alverley walked in, to find himself in a very stuffy room, with a faded carpet, a greeny-yellow paper, and an atmosphere of smoke. When the smoke cleared away he saw a long-whiskered face, with a pipe in its mouth, staring at him with wide,



"OH! HOW LOVELY!" SAID RUBY, WITH KEEN APPRECIATION. "ARE THEY ALL FOR ME?"

open eyes, and presently that it belonged to the owner of the apartment, who, arrayed in a tattered dressing-gown, was lounging at full length on a drab sofa.

"What brings you here?" he asked suspiciously, with a furtive glance at a black bag in the corner of the room, but without any change of attitude. "There's nothing to see here; and if there was, you ain't going to see it."

"Then Anna Gower was mistaken!" said Lord Alverley, drawing an arm-chair opposite the sofa, and coolly throwing himself into it. "Excuse my sitting down, but I'm tired. Have a weed!" offering his silver-mounted cigar-case.

Godson's eyes glittered, and he stretched out his hand with the eagerness of an impoverished smoker, who has long been obliged to do without the best tobacco.

"Your tobacco's real first-chop, sir!" he said, admiringly. "May I ask how much this sort of weed is a piece?"

"I really can't tell; the sum is too much for my brain. I buy them at so much a thousand."

"And how long does it take you to get through a lot like that?" he went on, with the foolish curiosity of a weak brain.

"I don't smoke by rule, so I couldn't tell."

"I can tell you how many pipes I have a-day, so I am sharper than you are!" and he looked at the tip of his cigar with a chuckle.

"Of course you are! How many do you have?"

"One; because when I begin, I never stop!" bursting into a loud laugh.

"Ah! that's a capital way of reckoning. No one can say that one is too much." A little more desultory conversation, and then Lord Alverley turned round, saying, "Have another!"

To his surprise his cigar-case was gone. He had placed it there for the purpose of testing Godson's mania, but he could have sworn that it was not possible for him to have touched it, without his seeing it.

Much puzzled, and rather amused, he stooped down, pretending to look for it. Godson seemed

distressed at its loss, and helped in the search with great zeal.

"Just tell me your name and address, sir; and if I find it after you've gone, I'll send it after you!"

"Willfred Penraven, Carlton Club," relying on his Christian names not being known.

"Penraven!" said the other, thoughtfully. "I don't call to mind anyone of that name before!"

"Who was it you said sent you to me?"

"Your friend, Anna Gower. Look here, Mr. Godson, I won't say anything more about my case, if you'll agree to show me your curiosities—its disappearance is unaccountable!"

"Not at all; it's all that chair you are sitting on, sir! There must be a hole in the leather. A gentleman who was here the other day lost his watch in the same way."

"Oh! very well; I'll change it," and Alverley, with the utmost gravity, took another seat.

"Now for the curiosities. I have a small collection myself——"

"Will you let me see them?" eagerly, as he went slowly into the corner and fetched a black bag.

"Some day, perhaps!" thinking to himself he would keep a sharp eye upon him if he did.

Very reluctantly Godson emptied the contents of the bag upon the shabby green cloth. It was a miscellaneous collection of articles, amusing because of their utter incongruity with each other.

A silver card-case, a penny whistle, a packet of pins, a gold brooch, a hair-brush, a solitary white kid glove, a pair of brass snuffers, scissors, thimbles, reels of silk, cork-screws, silver chains, an ivory shoe-horn, ivory tablets, various purses, earrings, a pair of skates, &c.

"Have you nothing else? I don't think so much of it, after all!" said Alverley, contemptuously. "I thought from what Anna said, that you had something really startling in the way of jewellery!"

"Did she speak of it, naughty girl? That's private!"

"Yes, you may as well let me see it. You really must, you know, as I've lost my cigar-case."

"You mustn't tell anyone!" looking round suspiciously. "Now you won't will you?"

"Tell anyone! why should I? Be quick and empty the bag. Shall I help you?"

"No; hands off! I say. If you are going to touch it you shan't have a sight of it!" catching it up from the table and turning his back.

"After all, I almost think I had better call a policeman to help me look for my case!" taking one step towards the door.

"No! no! no!" exclaimed the other, in the extremity of terror. "Here, you shall see it; you're a good fellow, I'm sure!"

With nervous fingers he extracted a small packet from the deepest recesses of the bag, and hastily undoing its innumerable wrappers, placed the Countess of Chester's lost star upon the table!

(To be continued.)

THE Japanese always bury their dead with the head to the north, and for this reason no Japanese will sleep with his head in that position. Many private houses and hotels have a diagram of the points of the compass pasted on the bedroom ceiling for the convenience of guests.

ALBINO is a curious freak of nature, and occurs not only among the human race, but also among several species of animals. One has seen quite white horses, dogs, stags, deer, hares, ravens, crows, and sparrows; but an amphibian albino is a thing of great rarity, and almost the only specimen of this kind known is a white frog now in the Natural History Museum. This frog is absolutely white, and has red eyes, which stamps it without a doubt as belonging to the Albino class.



"NO, NO; I WILL NOT HAVE IT. TAKE IT BACK!" EXCLAIMED BERRY, VEHEMENTLY.

BROWN AS A BERRY.

CHAPTER XII.

"COME out to us at once," telegraphs Eve from India. "Wire to us which ship, and Colonel Chester will meet you at Bombay."

It comes as an answer to the problem Berry has been trying so long to solve, and is a relief to her doubts and fears.

Since that evening he so grievously offended, John Holmes has studiously avoided her, and been absent from home so much that his mother takes alarm; and, after the manner of women, even the best of them, is half-inclined to year round and banish Berry from her favour. Her husband's common-sense comes to the rescue, and although he is not strong-minded enough to resist the "I told you so," so dear to the prophet when the prophecy comes true, he at least manages to put the culprit in a better light.

"The child means no harm; you would not like John to have a wife who didn't love him—only married him for money!" he suggests, artfully; but his wife, though she wavers at this, will not at once give in.

"I'd have liked him to marry a lady," she answers, doggedly, still harping on the old string.

"That's as it may be. For my part, I shouldn't relish a fine madam who'd make the boy despise his parents, and perhaps take him from us altogether."

"Now, James, that is just like you; as if Berry would behave like that. She is a dear, good girl, and I am very fond of her whoever she marries! You never did do her justice, I know; but mind this, if you don't agree with me you can keep silent, for I won't hear a word against her."

So the judicious dispraise preserves peace, and the old man obuckles to himself at the success of his artifice. Knowing how impetuous

his wife is, in spite of her kind heart, he had feared that she might have said something in her hot displeasure that would have been repented of deeply enough when too late. With characteristic north-country good nature and open-handedness, he is always careful that the laws of hospitality should not be in the smallest degree infringed, more especially when the guest is, as now, so young and so utterly alone.

Perhaps it is pleasant news to all when the message from India is received. The old people are honestly delighted that the girl is provided for, and Berry is, for many reasons, glad to go. Only John looks doleful and stays in that night, keeping his eyes fixed so intently and persistently on his perverse little lady-love, that at last she springs up with crimson cheeks and rushes away. Then he, too, swings out of the room in a passion, and the moment after the hall door closes with a clash.

His parents look at each other aghast, and cannot but think it well that this disturbing element will soon be removed; besides, Berry, with her little haughty glances and high-bred ways, has always been a restraint upon their homeliness, and kind as they mean to be, they cannot but feel it so.

Captain Cardell's debts have been all paid during these last few days. John Holmes receives the money under compulsion only, knowing what fresh cause of offence he would give were he to refuse it; Captain Sowerby has very strict ideas about these things, and accepts on principle as he would have paid a similar debt had it cost him his whole fortune; and when these two do not demur it is impossible for the two young subalterns to repudiate the comparatively small sums which are owing to them.

There is some discussion how the hundred pounds which is left, when everything is cleared up, is to be laid out to the best advantage; for after the passage-money has been paid there will be little enough left to supply even ordinary wants; but at this juncture Captain Sowerby steps in with a very welcome proposition.

He had hitherto held aloof, fearing to pledge himself to any extent with the pauper daughter of a deceased brother officer, knowing how, in such cases, kindness is seized upon and often made the excuse for succeeding impositions. The duty he owes to his own family is a sufficient reason for his selfishness to satisfy himself; and surely no one else has the right to say a word when his wife wrote such a charming, well-composed letter of condolence directly she heard of the unhappy man's unfortunate death, and followed it up by afterwards inviting the bereaved girl to spend a long day with them.

True, Berry had not come, but the attention was the same, and they have nothing to reproach themselves with there. But now circumstances are altered. If Mrs. Chester intends to take her up—and really it is not everyone who would care to be burdened with an unmarried, portionless sister—then there can be no danger in showing her a little courtesy, and taking some trouble on her behalf.

They are to go out to India the following month in a troopship, and Captain Sowerby now offers to apply for a passage to be given to Berry, which there is every hope will be granted, in the consideration of the exceptionally sad circumstances of the case. Besides, as Mrs. Sowerby shrewdly observes, the girl will be very useful with the children, for nurses, it is proverbial, are always more sea-sick than their mistresses.

With whatever motives offered, however, the chance is eagerly accepted, and Berry busies herself in getting an Indian outfit, and the necessities for the voyage, recovering much of her lightheartedness in the excitement of preparation.

It is the dream of her life realised at last, just when, apparently, it had vanished for ever; and besides seeing the country that she has pictured so wonderful, there will be Eve and Eve's baby, whose birth had been announced just before their father's death.

It is a week before her departure, which is now

a settled thing, that John Holmes comes to her with a parcel in his hand, and a rather sheepish expression on his face.

"May I speak to you one moment?" he asks, in so humble, yet so pleading a tone that she cannot but consent.

She bows her head gravely.

"You know what I told you the other night!"

"Not a word more of that, if you please," she says, decidedly.

"You give me credit for very little pride if you think that I would trouble you again on that subject, after the unmistakable aversion you expressed."

Berry blushes furiously, and could have bitten her tongue out for the incautious remark. He is sorry for her confusion, and hastens to add,—

"I only referred to it, Miss Cardell, because I think a love like mine has, or ought to have, certain privileges. Don't you agree with me?"

"I—I don't know."

"Don't you think I have a right to offer you a little present as a memento? I do not want to be utterly forgotten, and what other chance have I of being remembered?"

"I will not forget you, Mr. Holmes."

"But you will not refuse my gift?"

"No; not if you wish it."

They seem to have changed places for the time being. He is composed and more manly-looking than she has seen him yet, and all Berry's dignity appears to have flown away beyond recall. But when he opens the case he is holding, and displays its contents, she recovers a little of her usual determination.

"No, no; I will not have it. Take it back!" she exclaims, vehemently, as the big, gleaming stones flash before her eyes, and dazzle her with their brightness. It is a pendant heart with a monogram in rubies; and though she has seen and known too little of any sort of jewels to guess at their real value, common sense tells her that its cost must have been very large.

"Miss Cardell, why?"

"Because it is giving you money with one hand and taking it back with the other. I know your kind heart, and that you were unwilling to take my father's debt from me; but if you understood how strongly I feel on this subject you would not strive against it so."

"I meant it as a gift—a slight atonement, if you will—but not an equivalent," he answers, reproachfully; and if in this he speaks somewhat falsely, surely he might be forgiven, for the money has weighed upon him as heavily as only gold can, when gained in such a manner. He succeeds, too, beyond his deserts, for Berry is softened by his words and beguiled by them. Had she known that that pretty, glittering thing had cost nearly double what she had paid him she would have been, perhaps, justly indignant at the deceit, honestly as it is meant.

"I will accept it as it is offered—in remembrance of a friend," she says, with a bright, upward glance; and then holds the heart up to the light so that she can see the colours change as she moves it to and fro.

"My favourite colour—red," she says, with a little gasp of delight, allowing herself only now to admire it. With praiseworthy reticence he forbears to mention that the fact was well known to him, and had been considered in the purchase. He only smiles at her benignantly with the would-be air of one who takes a fatherly pleasure in what pleases her.

"You will not mind being sometimes reminded of me when you wear it?" he asks presently, when the silence has been somewhat long, and has a little weakened his virtuous resolution of saying nothing that could be construed into a renewed avowal of his love.

"I should be very ungrateful if I forgot!" she answers, smiling a little nervously, as the memory of some words long since said recurs to her. "I would as soon marry my footman!" she had exclaimed indignantly, when her father had first suggested the match to her; and now feels terribly ashamed of her girlish petulance and pride. The love of such a man can only be a glory to her, and not a shame. Will the time ever come, she wonders, when she will re-

pent his rejection, having found all the rest of the world cold, false, and calculating! She has vowed to have no husband, and consequently no lover; but surely a friend like this she will never meet again.

She puts out her hand with a little shy, tremulous smile, having no fear that the offence of the other night will be repeated. Nor has she any need for dread, for though he loves her more than ever, and his heart now is beating very high, he realises at last how far away she must ever be from him.

"If you will let me be of any use to you at any time, I shall be very glad!" he says, soberly.

And then Mrs. Holmes comes in and interrupts them. She gives a significant glance in their direction. Who knows after all it may come right, and her ambition, as well as her son's happiness, be secured.

But nothing of this sort comes to pass, and when the last day arrives, she sorrowfully gives up the idea, and devotes all her energies to speeding the parting guest. She and her husband had both wished to accompany Berry to Portsmouth, where she is to meet her friends and embark; but the girl strenuously refuses, knowing what a sacrifice it would be to them to go from their usual habits and break up the comfortable home even for a time. She tries to prevent John from going with her, but here she signally fails; for he is very obstinate on the point, and, with a grave reminder, insists upon his rights.

So it happens that these two journey down together on opposite sides of the carriage, with a demure sense of the ridiculous on Berry's part, but nothing save despair on her lover's, as they hurry swiftly along to the point where they will probably separate for ever.

He has bought the softest, warmest rug he could procure for her use, the newest novels, the freshest fruits and flowers, so that she cannot but be moved by his kindness, and makes unusual efforts to be amiable, which efforts so far succeed as to stamp the few remaining hours they spend in travelling as the happiest and, at the same time, the saddest in John Holmes's life.

Captain Sowerby and his wife exchange meaningful glances when they both arrive at the hotel, and the young man declares his intention of remaining till the following day to see them off, clinging desperately to the only good thing that seems left to him now—the mere sight of that small piquant face, with its dreamy eyes and scornful lips, acting on him like a narcotic, and dulling the pain which he will have ample leisure by-and-by to feel.

"Are you engaged to that young fellow?" asks Mrs. Sowerby, looking askance at the luxuries which have been provided for her fellow-traveller under the name of necessities.

"No, no, certainly not; why should you think so?"

"He seems very attentive to your wants and wishes. It would be a good match, too," thoughtfully, and a little regretfully too, as it crosses her mind what a different life hers might have been had such a chance been offered her. Following the drum has its disadvantages when one's means are slender, and one's tastes extravagant.

And Berry, reading something of her thoughts, forbears to express the disdain she has always felt at the bare idea, and is too loyal or too little vain of her conquest to betray her lover's secret.

"There is nothing in it at all," she says, hastily, and is glad when she sees the assertion has received implicit belief. Mrs. Sowerby has always been too ready to tell of her own triumphs to have faith in the reticence of another.

The morning dawns—such a bright, beautiful day—with nothing of the dark clouds and cold, driving rain which made Eve's going so doubly dispiriting.

Berry always sensitively alive to external influences accepts it as a good omen, and is in high spirits. The gloomy past is forgotten for the time in the promise of a happier future.

Several glances follow her admiringly as she paces up and down the quay with Mrs. Sowerby's children clustering around her, and John Holmes beside her, looking very miserable indeed. As the time draws near for him to lose her altogether he can almost find it in his heart to blame her for

her heartlessness in thus ignoring his grief, only that he is loath to dethrone her from the pinnacle of faultlessness to which his fancy has raised her.

A bell rings on board-ship, and Mrs. Sowerby is seen gesticulating frantically for them to join her. The children run away as once in obedience to her summons, while Berry, moving slower, is left behind. For a moment John Holmes can speak to her alone, but not at once does he avail himself of his opportunity—his heart is too full for words. Not till they reach the gangway, and Berry stops and turns, offering her hand, does he find speech, and then bursts out so violently that she is startled, and looking round nervously to see if anyone is within hearing; but all are too much engrossed with themselves in the excitement of the last few moments to heed anything besides.

"My darling! my darling! what shall I do without you?"

How can she help being touched by the appeal?

"I am very sorry—very, very sorry, John," she says, gently, with a woman's instinctive tact using his christian name, knowing that it will comfort him to remember afterwards that she did so.

"Thank you, dear; I know how good you are. I—I wish it could have been otherwise."

"And so do I!" is her involuntary cry as it forced upon her what she has refused—a love and faith so true and unending.

"Can it never be?" wistfully.

"Never. Good-bye, John."

"Good-bye."

She goes from him quickly, the tears starting to her eyes and nearly blinding her. It is because of that, and because of her excitement that, stepping on board, she loses her balance, and stumbles against a gentleman standing there. He moves aside and raises his hat politely. Afterwards, it strikes Berry as a strange coincidence that she should have gone from one lover almost into the arms of another.

CHAPTER XIII.

H. M. S. *Andromeda* is out of sight of shore that same evening. She is universally deemed the swiftest and neatest of the Indian troopers, and does not seem likely now to lose her hard-gained reputation as she glides on gracefully through the water, carelessly breasting the slight swell that is already causing some consternation in the saloon.

Berry soon tires of the dreary dinner below, and goes above. She has been seated between the captain and Mrs. Sowerby, and her opposite neighbour was Mr. Le Sage, who had, at the last moment, been ordered to join the regiment in India. Beside him, again, was the stranger against whom Berry had so awkwardly stumbled when stepping on deck; and looking furtively once or twice in his direction, she was vexed to see that he had evidently no remembrance of the fact, or attached so little importance to it and her, that he had given it no second thought.

Once on deck nothing troubles her. She is a capital sailor, and enjoys nothing better than a struggle with storm and wind. To-night, however, it is so quiet that her mood incessantly catches the infection, and curling herself up in a long fur cloak (which was Mrs. Holmes's parting gift) she watches the waves dramatically, as they wash against the sides of the ship, and wander restlessly on. By-and-by she falls asleep, for how long she does not know; but it seems only a few moments later that voices fall softly on her ear and presently arouse her altogether.

It is Mr. Le Sage and her other *vis-à-vis* at table.

"Women that go from necessity having husbands, women that go from choice wanting husbands. I have been backwards and forwards so often, and know the type so well."

The speaker betrays no bitterness in his tone, and nothing of the scorn that is so often unworthily shown for that which, it should be remembered, is the weaker as well as the gentler

sex. There is only a tired accent in his voice, as might be in that of any onlooker who is weary of watching the game in which he takes no interest.

"At least there are some pretty women on board this time, you won't deny that!" answers young Le Sage, with a half-conscious smile—a little apologetic, too, for what he fears the other might deem the enthusiasm of youth.

"Pretty! All women are pretty or ought to be, seeing that it is the only good quality of which they can convince us."

The words are carelessly uttered, but with it a touch of ill-temper as well, aroused not so much by the subject as by his companion's continuous chatter. It is the meaningless laugh of Lawrence Le Sage in reply that irritates Berry beyond endurance, and causes her to give vent to an indignant exclamation which makes them both turn round.

She is wide awake now, and the little brown face with its angry glowing eyes, looks very quaint and elf-like peering out from its heavy weight of fur.

Captain Carew is startled into a feeling of involuntary admiration, which many a fairer face has failed to evoke, and hastily rises to his feet.

"I beg your pardon, I did not know you were there;—I am very sorry if I offended!" says Lawrence Le Sage.

"Listeners, even unwilling ones, have no right to complain of what they hear," frigidly.

"After all, I said so little, if anything. May I introduce Captain Carew to you? He was, I think, the chief offender."

"A cowardly reason for making my name known, but I will not quarrel with a motive that has so fortunate a result. I was talking at random I suppose—a wretched habit of mine that does not deserve your forgiveness." And Captain Carew bares a good-looking head in mock penitence and awe.

"Nevertheless, I have no right to withhold it; no doubt you had good cause for your opinion."

She is angry still, more so that she cannot pour out the vials of her wrath upon this stranger. Mr. Le Sage has wisely vanished, so that she is comparatively tongue-tied, and can only show her displeasure by an unusual display of dignity.

Captain Carew seats himself beside her, and prepares to discuss the matter comfortably.

"You think I have been a sufferer, I suppose," he says, smiling. "In which category would you place me then? among the men who have been married, or those against whom matrimony has only been attempted?"

She looks at him keenly, and lifts her dark brows in an effort to remember what she had heard him say.

"In neither!" she answers, after a moment's inspection and thought. "I think, as a rule, you would be too impracticable for the one or the other."

He laughs, a little pleased at her perspicacity. No man can resist the flattery implied in a dissection of his character, more especially when the divination happens to be tolerably correct.

"You make no allowance for the weakness of youth. Don't you think I may have been more impressionable then?"

"No, I don't!" shaking her head wisely. "Once weak always weak. Youth would make no difference at all."

"And age?"

"Ah! that I cannot tell."

"And I can only fear. Is it a sign of old age creeping on now I wonder, that I feel—I scarcely know what I feel?"

"Such haziness is a sure sign, I should say," she returns, saucily; a little transient gleam of colour coming over the pale face for a moment, and making it more sweet.

"Ah! Well, I have enjoyed youth and immunity from danger long enough. Safety is a tiresome thing; I am not sorry to abjure it."

"Why should you do that? Wait till it forsakes you, as it will some day."

"It has forsaken me already," he answers, softly, letting his dark blue eyes rest on hers so earnestly and lingeringly that it causes them to drop abashed.

Then vexed with herself for showing any

knowledge of his meaning, she lifts them again, defiantly.

"It is late and getting dark. I shall go below," she says, abruptly.

"Then you will let me help you to disentangle yourself! See, you are quite powerless in the embrace of this huge fur wrap; without assistance you could not have escaped."

"I am free now," standing up and shaking herself, looking such a tiny, slim thing in her plain, black gown, that Captain Carew is touched again with a novel tenderness.

"Free for how long?" he asks, half-banteringly, but with an undertone of earnest that frightens her, and makes her hurry away with only a nod, and muttered good-night.

Captain Carew turns and lights a cigar with a subdued smile on his face. The brief, bright flame shows him to be a singularly handsome man, with deep blue eyes that, though dark, are several shades lighter than are ordinarily seen with such raven black hair and olive complexion. Eyes "put in with a smutty finger," as they say in Ireland, which is also the land of his birth, as anyone might guess from a certain richness in his voice, which must not be confounded with the brogue; and an impulsiveness in his movements and speech, that the colder-mannered English seldom if ever possess.

A man, who has lived for over thirty years in a world which has flattered and flouted him by turns, as fortune favoured him or frowned; and with a strength legibly written both in features and form, that denotes him to have been alike indifferent to either, though capable of battling with any adverse fate that might have threatened.

Perhaps the secret of this indifference and strength of purpose is, that his affections have never been sufficiently touched to make him weak. His parents being dead, he had been brought up by distant relations, who, while doing their whole duty towards him, had certainly done nothing more.

Afterwards, when he had been old enough for other love to enter his life he had not cared to pursue—

"The light that lies
In woman's eyes."

And the only romance in which he had as yet acted a part had not been of his own seeking, and had soon found an end.

He had been in India now some years, and had been in no danger of losing a heart there, which he had kept free among the fairer women at home.

Perhaps the memory of the girl who had loved him, and whom he had not loved, was sufficiently strong to serve him as a safeguard against other wiles, for memory is often more powerful in its softening influence than the thing which it keeps alive.

Now, for the first time, he is interested in a woman's ways, and finds something infinitely attractive in them—so attractive, in fact, that he lingers on deck smoking and thinking until the sharp ring of a bell denotes it is eleven o'clock, and all the ship's lights are to be extinguished.

Berry is domiciled in the "horse-box" with a quartermaster's wife, and the bride of a young subaltern whose united ages would not make two-score years. Girl-like, Berry is taken with them on this account, and is glad that she is not placed with Mrs. Sowerby, where, if she had more air and room, she would also have less peace and comfort.

The quartermaster's wife, a middle-aged kindly woman, interfering little with her companions, is already asleep, when Berry goes into the cabin.

The bride is whispering a protracted good-night to her husband on the big-cushioned seats outside, and the low monotonous come in through the open window with a soft soothing sound.

By-and-by a heavy tread comes along the passage, and a voice she knows, but has heard for the first time that evening, says a careless good-night, which, combined with the answering greeting, sends a warm flush to Berry's pillowed cheek.

"Good-night, Carew. Where have you been hiding yourself to-night?"

Captain Carew gives a home-thrust in reply, that makes the bridegroom laugh, and the bride run blushing into the cabin. The two men pass on together, and presently all is so quiet and peacefully still that Berry falls asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning finds fewer people at the breakfast-table than had dined together the night before. The sea, though comparatively smooth still, has already found out its easiest victims and laid them low, and many others find it difficult at first to conform to the unaccustomed punctuality of a ship's routine.

Mrs. Sowerby is one of those who are absent, and from her husband Berry hears a piteous tale of the night she has had with herself and children all ill, and both her nurses obstinately expressing their determination to do nothing until the dreadful rolling has ceased, or until custom has enabled them to bear it better.

Confused cries and groans are coming from the nursery, and Berry congratulates herself afresh that she has not been placed in its close vicinity, knowing well that her friend would not be likely to have spared her in her need.

"I will take the children on deck directly breakfast is over!" she says, feeling a little compunction at her selfish thoughts.

Captain Sowerby declares his gratitude to her, and his disapproval of the food placed before him, by a breath; and turning to tell a waiter behind him his opinion of the latter in no measured terms, leaves Berry at leisure to look round.

At the first glance she sees that Captain Carew is no longer a near neighbour, but has taken his seat among the bachelors at another table.

She is not utterly devoid of cavaliers, however, for Mr. Le Sage is still there; and even as in her heart she is regretting the absence of last night's acquaintance, a tall, broad-shouldered man in cavalry uniform put his leg over the form and seats himself beside her.

It is evidently not decreed that she shall be in lack of lovers during the voyage. The newcomer, though he does not speak, has a keen eye to her requirements, for each time she is in want of anything a big brown hand is stretched out and unostentatiously procures it for her.

She does not dare to raise her eyes to his face, but, as the meal goes on, she feels as though she were the heroine of one of her favourite fairy tales—as though she were in an enchanted castle, and spirit hands with invisible bodies were ministering to her wishes.

She is glad when Captain Sowerby moves, and by rising with him she can break the spell. She does not lift her eyes until she has passed the whole length of the tables and made good her escape into the ladies' cabin.

There she finds Mrs. Sowerby in bed, very fretful over what she deems her illusage, and surrounded by her children, who are divided between quarrelling and crying.

"Let me take them away, and you will get some sleep," says Berry, after duly expressing her sympathy with the poor woman's really pitiable condition.

"Thank you, dear! thank you very much. So unfortunate that we are not nearer to each other. It would be far nicer for both."

Berry utters a polite reply, that is nevertheless not an assent; and is glad when she can escape on deck, in spite of the fact that three children in various stages of discontent are clinging to her skirts.

The air is keen at first, and a fresh salt spray is blowing up, that must invigorate anyone even against their will; and presently Berry is engaged in a romp that scandalises a group of matrons who have already gathered together and got friendly over gossip, and a few less agile maidens who have too much self-consciousness to dare to attempt any innovation on the ceaseless pacing up and down, which, however monotonous it may be, is at any rate correct.

But if the women look askance, the men are more inclined to admire than condemn. Several glances follow her with interest as she darts to and fro, the children in pursuit, and her laughter ringing out as free and unconcerned as theirs.

By common consent the part of the deck they have chosen for their games is left clear, and not until Berry has sunk exhausted on a seat, and the little ones cluster round her for a story, does anyone attempt to join her. Then it is Captain Carew, who comes leisurely up and would have spoken, but at that moment another man approaches from the opposite direction.

It is Berry's friend of the breakfast-table, and some instinct of mischief seizes her as they both stand talking within earshot.

The children have asked her for a tale—a fairy-tale—and with a little toss of her head, she begins the story of the White Cat. Her voice falters a little when she gets to the castle where the prince is waited upon by invisible servants whose hands only are seen as they provide him with everything he could possibly require. She goes on, however, boldly, notwithstanding that she is sensible of the scrutiny of a pair of dark eyes, and knows that both men are listening to every word she says.

"Were they good fairies, Berry?" asks six-year-old Paul, when she has finished.

"Oh, yes! Good fairies, of course. They fed the poor prince when he was hungry, and laid him in a beautiful bed when he was tired; and sent him away next day with lovely presents for all his little brothers and sisters at home."

"Are there any fairies now?" anxiously. Berry shakes her head.

"Not even in this ship?" asks Paul, again, being vividly impressed with this new experience of life out-of-doors and out of sight of land.

"Not good ones," she returns, with wicked intent.

"Me don't love bad fairies," haps baby Ethel on her knee.

"No more do I," agrees Berry, decidedly.

The stranger passes on with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and Captain Carew drops on the seat beside her.

"What a lovely day!" is his opening remark; but Berry, smitten suddenly with a sense of her indiscretion, blushes vehemently and cannot bring out a coherent reply.

She loosens the deep fur cape from her shoulders, and with it a fading hot-house rose—one of those John Holmes had given her the day before—and lays them down beside her.

"It is very hot," she says uncomfortably, at last, when he does not volunteer any other subject of conversation.

"I cannot say I find it so," with a slight smile; "but then I am one of those who look confidently for snow in winter and roses in summer, having no vivid imagination."

"And when the cases are reversed!"

"Of course one must be prepared for casualties; one must be sometimes wrong—it is a feather in one's cap to be sometimes right."

"You are very philosophical!"

"No, I only try to be so. Often I feel absurdly disappointed at the keen east wind which blows on a bright spring day, or the early frost that comes in an autumn, even a summer night."

"At least this weather is reasonable," says Berry, absently, her thoughts busy over her foolishness in establishing an understanding with a perfect stranger whose name she does not even know; and who certainly has not betrayed any undue bashfulness in his conduct towards her. Feeling so utterly to blame, she loses all right to resent it, too; and can only wonder where her thoughtlessness will lead.

"Yes, it is cold enough; as cold as only an English January can be."

Berry assents; and then Carew knows what he has before suspected, that the heat of which she had spoken a few moments back, had been caused by confusion and not by any sudden change in the temperature. He wonders, with a little unaccountable excitement, whether it was his presence which could account for it, and if so, why! The question involves so many bewildering replies that he pulls himself up sharp and will pursue the subject no longer.

"Put on your cape again. You will catch cold if you stay without it," he suggests, gently.

It is partly the air of proprietorship in his tone, and partly a sense of having contrived himself so gloriously, that makes the girl flush crimson and turn away her face.

"It was romping with the children made me hot," she explains, apologetically.

"Of course!" gravely.

She allows him to place the cape on her shoulders, and obediently fastens it as told; but when he hands her the already faded rose, she waived it aside.

"No, not that. It is dead already!" she says, hastily, and as quickly repents her words, fearing that it may seem as though she had purposely given an opening for sentimental speech or deed; after her late escapade she is doubly sensitive as to the constructions that might be placed on even the most innocent act.

But he reassures her by placing the flower on the seat without remark, and she likes him the better that he does not attempt to avail himself of what he might have justly deemed an opportunity.

"A rose in winter is to me only a pathetic, not a lovely sight," he observes, simply. "It's life a forced one, reared in an artificial atmosphere—it's death a cruel one, directly it is exposed to the real outside air. I detest all incongruities."

But after, when she is gone, his coolness and composure to a certain extent desert him. It was easier to talk commonplaces in her presence, for he has never been one to wear his heart upon his sleeve; but now that he is alone, the dead flower lying there seems to appeal powerfully to his sympathy. The idea that it might be swept away, trampled on, or worse still, plucked up by careless, unknowing fingers, affects him strangely, and with indignant haste he stoops and takes it in his hand.

Half-amused, half-amazed at his own movement, he holds it irresolutely, wondering what to do next. To place it in his pocket-book would be a sign of weakness utterly foreign to his nature, to throw it away again requires more strength than he possesses. He hesitates, and then with the tenderness of one who commits the body of a loved child to the grave, he drops it gently overboard and watches it float away on the waves.

There is only one witness to what he has done, and that is the stranger who had noticed Berry that morning, and whose incipient admiration, already heightened by the girl's coquetry, now gains fresh impetus from the fact of rivalry.

He laughs a little contemptuously, and tossing away his cigar, strolls below to find out the names and antecedents of those who are to play subordinate parts in the drama he contemplates enacting for the purpose of ameliorating the tediousness of a long voyage by sea.

(To be continued)

THE German Emperor has two packs of cards made according to his own invention. Instead of the traditional figures on them, the Kings and Queens are represented by Sovereigns at present reigning in Europe. For the Knave, the Emperor, with questionable taste, has chosen the features of the principal Ministers of the German Empire. The King of Hearts is Leopold II., King of Belgium, in allusion to his well-known gallantry; the King of Diamonds, Humbert I. of Italy, from his taste for diamonds; the King of Spades, the Emperor Nicholas of Russia; and the King of Clubs, His Imperial Majesty himself. The Queen of Hearts is Queen Victoria; the Queen of Diamonds, Queen Margherita of Italy; the Queen of Spades, the Czarina; and the Queen of Clubs, not the Emperor's own wife, but the Empress Elizabeth of Austria. There are only two sets of these cards in existence. The Emperor had them made, after his own designs, at the Imperial manufactory of Altenburg, near Berlin.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfuous Hair, &c. 46 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

THE TWO ROSES.

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(Continued from page 271.)

"And I should be miserable without my child-love. Dolly, I will go to town to-night and not return until I can stand before your aunt a free man, and plead for her darling's hand. But Dolly, will you also send your encumbrance to the the rightabout."

"My what?"

"Your encumbrance—the gentleman you have never seen, but who yet has the assurance to believe you will marry him in October!"

Dolly smiled encouragingly.

"I will write to him."

"Don't make the letter too charming, sweet-heart, or he might insist on keeping you to your promise!"

"Mr. Marshall," said Kenneth, when he joined the Rector and his wife at lunch. "You were quite right last night. Poverty and love are worth more than misery and riches. I am going to London to shake off my fetters. I shall return soon to plead my cause with Miss Rose. Please let me be plain Kenneth Devreux to her and her niece until I can explain myself to them."

CHAPTER V.

LORD DORNTON called at Acacia Cottage and cross-examined the caretaker; but she denied all knowledge of Miss Delaval's movements. She did hear the ladies had gone to the seaside, but she wasn't sure.

The Earl went next to Mr. Dyason; but the moment the lawyer heard his plans he refused all assistance, and hinted pretty plainly that he should resign the management of the Dornton estates if his client persisted in his dishonourable conduct.

"Resign away!" laughed the Earl; "it won't hurt me. You forget, Dyason, from the moment I accomplish what you term my 'dishonourable conduct,' I have no estate to manage; all that was mine passes to Miss Delaval. She loses nothing but an empty title."

"She would have been the loveliest countess in England."

"I fear our taste in beauty differs. I see nothing in the young lady."

Mr. Dyason tossed his head.

"Well, Dyason, will you give me Miss Delaval's address?"

"I haven't got it."

"I suppose a letter sent to Acacia Cottage would be forwarded?"

"All letters sent there are forwarded to Squire Dugdale. I believe he regards your cousin as a grandchild, so he will know how to avenge her wrongs."

This was not encouraging. Lord Dornton did not feel inclined for his letter to Rose Delaval to run the gauntlet of Mr. Dugdale's inspection; he therefore wrote to the Squire, begging him to forward his cousin's address. Then, fuming at the delay—for this was his third day in London—he called at his club to see if any letters awaited him. A goodly pile, but one which struck his attention first—perhaps because it bore the Scarborough post-mark, and Scarborough was near Dolly—an innocent-looking letter enough, in a plain white envelope, with neither monogram nor crest, and directed in a round hand, rather pretty, and very clear.

He opened it slowly, wondering who was the writer, and found that the note hardly covered the first page, and bore neither date nor address.

"DEAR COUSIN,—"

"I hope you will forgive me, but I cannot marry you, as I like someone else a great deal better. I am very sorry if I have caused you any inconvenience, and I trust you will be as happy with all the Dornton property as I know we shall be without it.—Yours very truly,

"ROSE DELAVAL."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Earl, with a sigh of relief. "Now I can return to Dolly with a position fit for her acceptance. As to my cousin I need feel no remorse; that little 'we' in the last sentence speaks like volumes. Rose, like myself, has found out love is better than money. Well, if the happy swain is poor, it shall be my first object to settle a handsome portion on the bride; and now I'll drive to King's Cross and catch the Marton train."

It was far too late to present himself at the Rectory that night. He slept at the village inn, and surprised his friends the next day as they were sitting down to breakfast.

"Congratulate me!" he cried. "I am a free man, and can face Dolly's aunt with courage, for I can offer her darling not only a coronet, but wealth!"

Mrs. Marshall smiled. "I don't think the aunt will be obdurate. Would you believe it, she has just made a romantic match herself?"

"The aunt!"

"Well, she was only thirty-five, and looked less. It seems her lover had been abroad for years—came home to die."

"Then it was his death-bed she left Dolly to go off to?"

"Yes, and he persuaded her to marry him that she might be his heiress—and then he actually recovered!"

"And are they here—the happy pair?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Dugdale. They are at Shell Cottage, and Dolly is delighted."

Kenneth went to Shell Cottage in the afternoon, and sent in his card in due form. He had not long to wait. A handsome stalwart man with the traces of recent illness came to greet him.

"My wife and her niece are so afraid of face you that I have taken the onus of the explanation on myself."

"Afraid of me?"

"Are you not Lord Dornton?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, my wife deceived you, I confess, but she did it with a pious motive. Wanting her niece to be your wife, and yet to escape all share of your life, she played the rôle of Rose Delaval."

"I don't understand."

"They were namesakes. There are—I mean there were—two Rose Delavals."

"And I saw them both."

"You saw the same one in two rôles."

Kenneth smiled.

"Well, it matters very little if I saw the wrong Miss Delaval, for the right one has written to break off her engagement to me."

"And you came here to force her to fulfil it?"

"Oh, dear, no!" and it was Kenneth's turn to look annoyed. "I wouldn't annoy my cousin for the world. In fact, I am in love with someone else."

"Then I confess I cannot understand the object of your visit."

"I am bewildered myself! I am in love with Dolly, and I certainly believed that Miss Rose—I mean Mrs. Dugdale—was her guardian."

Mr. Dugdale laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"I never heard of anything being so comical!"

"I can't see it," said Kenneth, stiffly. "I must beg you, when you have recovered from your extraordinary hilarity, to give me Miss Rose's address, and tell me where she has taken Dolly."

"The fact is, Lord Dornton, there is a muddle all round; that is, if you are the person Dolly has spoken to us of as Mr. Devreux."

"I was christened Kenneth, and my family name is Devreux."

"Just so. Well, my wife's niece was christened Rose, and called Dolly to distinguish her from her aunt. As a matter of fact, my lord, Mr. Devreux has been making love to the very young lady from whose charms Lord Dornton was so thankful to escape, and Dolly Rose has accepted the cultor Rose Delaval renounced."

Kenneth looked bewildered.

"Then you mean that Dolly—"

"She shall come and answer for herself. I'm afraid it's a fact her true name is Rose Delaval. Still, if you object to the combination, I dare say you can persuade her to change the Delaval at an early date, and let you continue to substitute Dolly for Rose."

Reader, he persuaded her. And now, instead of there being two Rose Delavals, no one answers to that name now, for the elder Rose is Mrs. Dugdale, mistress of Dugdale Castle, and the sunshine of the old man's life; while the younger flower is the Countess Dornton, a most bewitching young matron, and the beauty of two or three seasons, the darling of her husband's heart, the favourite of the county.

[THE END]

WHAT LIES BEYOND?

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CHAPTER X.

WHITE and trembling, Mona gained the stairs, only to find them peopled, not by spectres, but real creatures of flesh and blood, startled by her cry of agony.

At their head stood Kate Mayhew, with a wrapper hastily thrown on, her light blue eyes wide open with amazement; but when she found who had uttered the scream, and saw Alton Ayre dash past her to throw his protecting arm about the almost fainting girl, their expression changed to incredulous disdain.

"We are to be treated to a new sensation, I presume," she said, aloud.

But this time Mona was deaf to Miss Mayhew's voice—deaf even to the reassuring words the man beside her was whispering in her ear.

"What has happened?" he questioned, gently. But she could only shudder in reply, and, cowering, clasp her face in her hands.

That horrid laugh still rang in her ears. It seemed as though she must hear it all her future life, as though henceforth the haunting curse of the tragedy had numbered her among its victims.

"She must have seen the ghost," piped the blonde's mocking voice, descending a step or two as she spoke, that her words might not fall to reach their mark. "Of course she inherits the superstition which prevails among the common people."

"Miss Mayhew, this is unwomanly," retorted Mr. Ayre, in well-merited rebuke.

It was the straw too much. That he should venture to utter a rebuke to her on the score of a low-born fisher-girl!

Henceforth her persecution of Mona had been passive; henceforth it should be active. In this moment she hated Mona with a deadly hatred, and hatred in Kate Mayhew's breast put to flight every passing impulse of good.

"It is disgraceful!" she emphatically asserted. "Evidently she has taken advantage of the story Claire told us to interest the gentlemen in her behalf, and to call us all from our beds. A disgraceful piece of imposition, which could only have its origin in a low mind."

But if they, for whom her words were intended, heard, they made no sign.

Leaning on Alton Ayre's arm, Mona gained her room.

"Thank you!" she murmured, when he softly said good-night. "I was very much startled just now, Mr. Ayre. I was fanciful, perhaps, but my candle went out, leaving me in darkness, and all the horrors that Claire had been relating came over me. Besides—something happened; but it won't do to talk about it. Good-night!"

Only to Claire, when they two were left alone, did Mona tell the whole truth.

"It was your imagination, dearest," Claire replied, soothingly. "My poor darling, how terrible it must have been!"

"Terrible, indeed, Claire; but not the part that imagination plays. I can understand now

the terror which in one minute of time may turn the blackest hair white as the driven snow."

The next morning, at breakfast, with innate delicacy, no one referred to the startling event of the night previous, until Miss Mayhew entered the room.

"A cup of coffee as quickly as possible!" she commanded of the butler, who had come forward to receive her order. "Really," she continued, addressing the assembled group, "my nerves were so startled last night that I was hardly able again to compose them. How strange, Miss Foster, that you should allow your imagination so entirely to prevail over your reason as to treat us all to such a scene!"

"I beg Miss Mayhew to accept my most humble apologies," retorted Mona, with quiet irony; "but I must plead my ignorance of the world, in not knowing that feeling of any kind, whether of pleasure or of pain, was strenuously barred from its portals. I was also under the impression that imagination existed only among the higher classes."

A few hours later, Mona asked,—

"Who is Kate Mayhew, Claire? And why is it that she rouses everything antagonistic in my nature? From the first moment that we met, and I looked into her cold, blue eyes, as they questioned my right beneath this roof, I felt that my evil genius had crossed my path. She attributed to me then a mean and pitiful motive, even as she has done since to my every act. Yet she is, you have told me, a distant relative of your own. Can it be that any of your blood flows in her veins?"

"No, dear. She is a relation by courtesy rather than blood, and it is for this reason I bear more with her faults. Almost twenty years ago, my cousin, Frank Mayhew, was returning from America with his young wife and little daughter, when the vessel was wrecked off the Newfoundland coast."

"Just as one of the small boats, full of passengers, was being cut away from the ship, the nurse, frantic with terror, leaped into it with the child in her arms. My cousin, almost mad with anxiety, followed in the next boat: but in the darkness of the night the two boats were separated. My cousin was saved, but they learned that the other boat had gone to pieces on the rocks, and all on board were lost."

"Frenzied with grief at the loss of their child—an exquisite little girl of two years, just beginning to creep—they travelled for several years on the Continent trying to find forgetfulness. One day, after their return, as my cousin was stepping into her carriage, a little flower-girl, scarcely eight years of age, offered, in a sweet, pleading voice, some violets for sale. Somehow, it touched a chord within her mother heart."

"The child had a pretty face, with large, blue eyes, and was only a little older than their own lost darling would have been. Questioning her, they learned that she lived alone with an old grandmother, who beat and ill-used her if unsuccessful in her day's wanderings, and who was willing enough, for a stipulated sum—which would render old age comfortable, and insure a decent burial—to give her up."

"Consequently, they adopted her, and the little flower-girl became an heiress, living a life of luxury, which, from the moment she entered upon it, she accepted as though conferring, rather than receiving, a favour. I do not fancy my cousin has found in the adopted one the happiness for which she looked, or the filling of the vacant place in her heart. She is an invalid, and often even now she lies whole days in her bed, devouring the miniature of a laughing child, which she always wears, sleeping or waking, upon her heart."

"Her own portrait was upon the little one's neck, and she says it is her only comfort that it went down with her darling under the sea. Kate is so selfish that she cannot bear the confinement of a sick-room. Her adopted father, blind to her faults, indulges every wish; and so my poor cousin is almost childless in deed as well as in truth."

"Oh, Claire! I can picture that sweet, patient face upon its snowy pillows, with its yearning, wistful eyes. And that little child's sunny head,

going down, down among the treacherous waves! I wonder why it is so vivid to me! I have a mother of my own. Oh, Claire, is it unnatural that I cannot love her as I ought to do—that when she speaks my heart is silent! Sometimes—sometimes, though I hate myself for it—I envy the girls who have mothers of whom they can be proud. What would I give to have such an one as you have told me of—to feel her soft, white hand upon my brow, to hear her dear, gentle voice, to wait upon her, to be her slave? Claire, I know now—this has been the emptiness which has filled all my life."

And rare as were tears to Mona's eyes, they rained now upon her cheeks, as the slight frame shook like a lily on its stem, blown by the high wind, in the mighty rush of a torrent of feeling she was powerless to check.

CHAPTER XI.

"COME in here, French. The room is deserted, and we can talk freely," said Alton Ayre one afternoon, a few days later, leading Bernard French into the library at Sea View, and drawing up a comfortable chair for his occupancy, throwing himself into one opposite. "Now," putting a cigar into his mouth as he spoke, and handing one to French, "as we are permitted to smoke here, and are otherwise free from interruption for the next hour, let me hear what brings Captain French of H.M.S. *Bonnybell*, alone and unattended, in the character of a strolling artist, upon these shores, and why am I strenuously compelled to keep silence as to his true position or leave him to pay his life as a forfeit? I don't want to pry, old fellow, but I must acknowledge that my curiosity has got the better of me."

"To no man but yourself, Alton, would I dare to confess the whole truth, but I know you to be both staunch and true, and you shall hear the story as it is, under the inviolable oath of secrecy, not only for the safety of my precious self, but the successful carrying out of my mission."

"To begin, several months ago, the Government learned of extensive smuggling operations that were being carried on on this coast, that a smuggling station was established here, and that bold and daring men were engaged in the work, but so cunning as well, that it was well-nigh impossible to trace their operations."

"At a dinner-party, one day, I heard the thing discussed, and I applied secretly to ferret the thing out, knowing, if I succeeded I would gain a step in my profession. I have always meddled with art, as you know, in my leisure hours, and this would serve as a pretext."

"After a long discussion, the Government assented, somewhat eagerly, to my proposition. My plan was this: To first come among these fishermen—a crafty set of fellows, too—and gain as far as possible, their confidence. Next, to learn who among them were the ringleaders, and where their secret place of meeting. Then to ascertain the night there was to be action instead of talk. Midnight the *Bonnybell* cruises up and down the coast. On that night, by my orders, given by signals, the men will steal in long boats, under cover of the darkness. A red light on the cliffs will be the signal to land, given while I have called upon the smugglers, in the name of the Government, to surrender. If they refuse, as they will and show fight, as they inevitably will, I fire my revolver in the air, when immediately my men surround me, and the real business of the night will begin."

"It strikes me the thing is attended with great personal danger," said Alton gravely.

"Scarcely," returned Bernard. "If my plans are not betrayed, which they cannot be, as no one suspects them—if my signals work right—there will not be a moment's delay, and the scoundrels will soon capitulate rather than receive an ounce of cold lead in their brains. There is but one thing troubles me Alton, and that is—"

"What?" said his friend.

"Rob Foster is the head of the gang!"

"Rob Foster! Mona's father!"

"Yes," assented Bernard, moodily, his eyes fixed on the floor. "Every time I look into her

beautiful face, I feel a traitor to her!" he cried, springing excitedly up, and pacing up and down the length of the room. "But I can't turn back now, else they would say I was a coward. I must go on, and to go on will make her one day—hate me!"

"Do you love her, then?" questioned Alton, in strangely-quiet tones, his own face very pale.

"I don't know. She fascinates me with a singular fascination. I look at her father and mother, and wonder what unwonted freak of nature betrayed itself in the offspring. Sometimes, Alton, I think it was no freak of nature—that she is not their child."

"Not their child?"

"No! She does not bear a trace of either of them in face or form. Were I an artist her picture would make my fortune. Hear her mother's harsh, strident tones, and then listen to the exquisite flexibility of her own voice; see the bold assertion of one, the delicate sensitiveness of the other. But I base my belief on something more than this—on a suspicion which I but wait my time to make certainty."

"And does she not dream nothing of the truth regarding her father?"

"Nothing! She is innocent as an infant concerning it. The man is desperate and hardened. They have a secret place of meeting, beneath the cliff. They crawl to it under the rock. Twice I have followed him thus far, but have not yet penetrated further. The time is not yet ripe to run unnecessary danger. Should he suspect the truth, he would murder me in my bed with as little scruple as he would wring the neck of a chicken. But he fancies because I am an artist, my ideas never get lower than the clouds, and, I believe, he imagines that were he to lay a glittering diamond at my feet, I would stamp it under the earth as glass. I would rather enjoy opening his eyes, but for Mona's sake, and the possibility of future suffering to her; and yet I don't know but it will be best for her in the end. It will break the old ties here, and lead her out into the world. Besides! If she needed and would accept it, I would give her my protection. Is she happy here, Alton? She did not seem happy the other night."

"She might be happy, I think, but for one woman's malice. She is by far the most beautiful girl here, and it requires a generous nature to give beauty its due. Such a nature our young hostess possesses in a rare degree—a contrast, indeed, to that of Miss Mayhew."

"Ah, the blonde! I hate such cold, blue eyes. They can never waken to warmth of love, or have their placid surface broken. And she hates Mona? Why?"

"Because she cannot reach to Mona's height, although one is a fisher-girl, and one an heiress—though the story runs that her own early life saw both want and misery. I am sorry you are in this business, my boy—first, because I think you run no small danger to yourself, and secondly, because I am afraid the disgrace will break Mona Foster's proud heart. Yet she does not love this man—how could she!—and you can but do your duty, and leave the rest to Heaven. Your secret is safe with me, Bernard. You know that, of course, even as I stand ready to prove good the words of friendship I offer you. I do not wonder they gave you this task. It needed a man both brave and true."

And Alton Ayre extended his hand as he spoke, which French warmly grasped—then went out into the hall attracted by Miss Raymond's voice.

And Alton Ayre wearily leaned his head on the mantelpiece by which he stood.

"He thinks he loves her," he said aloud. "He is far above her in station, a good fellow, loyal and true. Could I wish her a better fate! Ah, Mona, you both shun and avoid me! Why, then, should his words give me pain!"

Then he, too, went out, leaving the library deserted.

Deserted did I say! Only for an instant. Upon the folds of the heavy curtain screening one of the windows, cautiously there crept a small white hand, sparkling with rings.

The curtains parted; a white face with glistening eyes appeared in the opening. Then they

were widely thrust apart, and Kate Mayhew sprang, almost with a serpent's hiss, into the room, from the seat where, curled up like a kitten, she had drunk in every word the two men had uttered.

Her eyes fairly scintillated with a lurid light of wrath and malice; the small white teeth were clenched, and between them she breathed her words like anathemas.

"It is she, the smuggler's daughter, who has worked me this—who has taken from me the love of the one man I would have sacrificed all to win—for you love her, Alton Ayre, though you do not yet know it yourself. You love her, and I hate her with a double, treble hatred—aye, with a hate that means revenge! They say my mother killed my father in a fit of passion. I have heard granny tell the story, with a smile. Is her blood that runs in my veins, not that of the pale-faced woman who lies in bed and moans for a drowned child. I can feel it stir within me now. Aye, in this moment I could hate him, too! But beware, Captain French, of yourself, since you, too, must play a part in the drama! The day may come when you will call upon your man and they will not answer—when you will think Alton Ayre has betrayed you—when the smuggler shall have his triumph, and his daughter her defeat; and I—I, Kate Mayhew, will work to them all the ruin which they have worked to me! I need not seek revenge. Its weapons have been placed, this day, within my very grasp!"

CHAPTER XII.

UNEVENFULLY the next week slipped by, when, at the close of a long, rainy day, the guests at Sea View were gathered together in the spacious drawing-room, where a small wood fire kindled upon the hearth shed pleasant cheer, in spite of the driving rain and chill winds without.

The clock on the mantelpiece had just chimed eight dainty strokes when the butler threw open the door and announced a guest, Mr. French.

From her distant corner, where Miss Mayhew sat embroidering, she glanced hastily up, then the light eyes fell again upon her work, but with a new and baneful glitter.

Over the cheek of the fair, young hostess there crept a flush, and into her manner a warmth of greeting which proved to the artist how warm his welcome.

Mona sat quiet and unmoved; but it was to her side he passed.

"I have a message for you," he said.

"A message for me?"

"Yes. Your mother wishes to speak with you. She wishes you to come to her to-night."

"In the storm?"

"Yes. I urged that, but she said you were used to rain and rough weather, that you would not mind it. She forbade my returning with you too. 'Her father is out, and I want my girl alone,' she said. Will you go?"

"Of course," Mona answered. Then she rose, and whispering a few words in Claire's ear, passed out of the room.

As she stepped beyond the threshold, some one followed her.

"You are not going to leave us, Miss Foster?" questioned Alton Ayre's voice.

"Yes," she replied, pausing, with one foot on the stairs. "I am going home for a little while. I shall be back before you miss me." The last with a little quiet smile.

"That would be impossible," he replied, "since you see I missed you before you were quite gone; but you are not going to venture out on such a night and alone?"

"Oh, I do not mind. I am used to being out in any kind of weather. I think I like storms; and alone—yes, I like to be alone."

Then she ran up the stairs.

Above she stopped for one little second, and looked down on him, as he stood in the broad lamplight in his faultless evening dress, his dark eyes upraised to hers.

What a perfect representative he was of a man of his world! He might have graced a throne.

"Do I forget," she said, to herself, as she passed into Claire's room, "that it is only the peacock's borrowed plumes I wear, and that only for a little time, and for Claire's sake, they tolerate them."

Five minutes later she had slipped them off, and the little brown thrush had gone out into the storm and darkness, trudging resolutely on through the blinding storm, leaving behind the light, and warmth, and luxurious ease, and going forward to the barren hut where her mother awaited her.

Mrs. Foster rose up to welcome Mona with a strange eagerness in her usual stolid manner.

"You've come, lass. I knew you would. I was waiting for you."

"Of course I came, mother, since you sent for me. What is it that you wish?"

"Must I have a reason for wanting a look at my own flesh and blood? Throw off your wet cloak and draw nearer to the fire. Its warmth is good to-night, though we're in July. Now, tell me of everything up at the great house—everything, Mona. Don't keep back anything from your mother, lass."

The girl looked up surprisedly in the elder woman's face. She had never seen it before with this strange look of suppressed excitement. The large, red hands clasped and unclasped the fingers; the roughly-allipped feet tapped impatiently on the rude hearthstone.

"There's little to tell, mother," the girl replied. "I sometimes wish I had never gone there. They belong to such a different world to ours that it only keeps me staring at the gulf between us. Why did you ever let me go among them, mother?"

"I was glad to have you go, lass. Some of these days, mayhap, you'll be glad, too. But tell me about the castle. Is it haunted, as they say, and do the ghosts ever walk?"

A deadly whiteness crept over the girl's face, as once more rang in her ears that mocking, blood-curdling laugh of exultation.

Why had her mother asked her this question? She shuddered as she answered, slowly relating the events of the fateful night.

"And it was you who heard them, you who suffered by them, you whose brain might have been turned to madness?" cried the woman, in a fast-growing excitement.

"Yes, mother; but why should it not have been me? Who am I that I should be absolved, except that even the dead Raymonds might be too proud to show themselves to me, the fish-girl?"

"Yes, yes," assented Mrs. Foster. "But should they come again, don't let them startle you so. Or never go into the room where they are heard—never, Mona, never! Promise me this."

"Ah, mother, it doesn't need any promise. I dread that room now even by the broad light of day. I shudder even with the sunlight streaming full in as I pass its open door. But I am talking only of myself. You have told me nothing. Where is father?"

"He'll be in presently. I think I am growing old and fanciful. Somehow, I dread, lately, to be alone, and I miss you, child, little less as you've been to me."

"When I come home, mother, I'll try to be more," said the girl, with almost a wistful pleading in her tone, for, while she spoke, there floated before her memory that sweet, pale face among the pillows of which Claire had told her, and the very picture stung her with self-reproach.

With rare demonstrativeness she fell on her knees and buried her head in her mother's lap.

"Let father send for me to come back," she pleaded. "I'm safer here, and I'm happier, too."

"He won't do it," said the woman. "He's set in his way, father is. Besides, the young lady paid her share of the bargain. He must stick to his."

"Yes. I forgot that," Mona answered, rising now, and gathering up her still damp cloak. "But I must go. It is growing late. You will tell father I was here!"

"Best not. Good-night, child."

"Good-night!"

Once more she went out into the blinding storm. For the quarter of a mile her way lay along the coast it raged in ungovernable fury. With her step upon the ascent, she paused, as through the darkness there came to her the sound of voices. Shrinking closely to the rock, they passed her by undiscovered.

"A week from to-night, then," said one; "and a fine haul it'll be!"

Then a voice she recognized made answer. It was her father who spoke.

"A fine haul, indeed, for which our necks would pay the forfeit were we suspected. Ah, my boys, it needed only a little courage. We'll all be able to build Hermit castles, one day, ay, and all be able to have a hermit ghost!"

A coarse, loud laugh followed this last ally. Then they passed on in the darkness.

Had she heard aright? Their necks would pay the forfeit, her father had said. What could he mean? Was some new disaster brooding over her?

An hour later, with her wet garments replaced by dry clothing, she again entered the Sea View drawing-room. All were chatting gaily. No one, she thought, had missed her. Alton Ayre glanced up carelessly as she entered.

She could not know that his place, too, had been empty all the evening; that step by step he had followed her through the darkness and the storm, lest evil should befall her, and that Kate Mayhew had noted well his absence, and had placed on it her own evil construction.

Claire only was missing from among them. Where was she? She had excused herself, someone explained, and was writing letters in the library.

"Sing us something, Mona!" whispered Mr. French, approaching her side. "We have missed our nightingale sorely. It is almost midnight, too, and I must be going."

She turned to comply with his request, when a shrill, piercing scream of terror paleled every face. Simultaneously all started to their feet. It was followed by another and another, and then a heavy fall. Two or three sprang forward in the direction of the sound. The library was in darkness, but on its threshold lay Claire Raymond.

"She has seen the ghost!" exclaimed Mona, bending with passionate sorrow over her friend, and laying her warm hand upon the heart, whose beatings had well-nigh ceased.

But this time, not even Miss Mayhew gave a derisive echo to her words.

(To be continued.)

OLIVE'S EXPERIENCE.

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"Don't be vexed, Olive, dear; indeed your papa knows what is best for you."

Mrs. Arden spoke in a gentle, insinuating tone, for, to tell the truth, she was a little afraid of her high-spirited adopted daughter.

Olive laid down her book, with flashing eyes and colour that came and went like red lightning on her cheeks.

Mrs. Arden resumed,—

"Those young men are hardly the associates your papa would choose for you, my love, and he was not pleased at their staying so late last night; and—and—he is not willing you should go to the ball in their escort. He will go with you himself, if you wish very much to attend; but—"

"Stop!" interrupted Olive, indignantly. "I am to be a slave—a tool for the caprice of others; I am to have no independence of my own, it seems. Mother, I am tired of this kind of life!"

"Olive, Olive, my darling!"

"Yes, mamma, I know you are kind, and my father has always loaded me with benefits. I am not ungrateful, indeed; but oh, it is so hard to

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feel one's self tied down, even by silken cords! I cannot live so; I would rather be a beggar in the streets, or a scullion in the kitchen!"

Mrs. Arden burst into tears—she was a soft-hearted, gentle-natured creature; but Olive's eyes were dry, and her lips compressed into a thin scarlet thread.

Olive Arden was a decided beauty—dark, brilliant, and glittering, with magnificent hazel-brown eyes, a creamy white skin, just shadowed with crimson on either cheek, and luxuriant dark hair, growing low on a marble-smooth forehead. As she looked into her mirror that same day, an unconscious smile of triumph dimpled her full lips.

"I was born to conquer fate," she murmured to herself; "and I will be Doctor Arden's meek slave no longer!"

And when the good doctor, returning from his day's labour at night, looked round the room, he naturally questioned—

"Why, where is Olive?"

There was no answer. Olive had fled from her adopted home, leaving only a haughty little note to the purport that all search would be in vain.

"I want my freedom, and I will have it!" wrote Olive.

Even while Doctor Arden was reading and re-reading the hurriedly-written note, Olive was waiting on the doorsteps of a large mansion, in the centre of Belgrave, for the answer to her timid ring. Closely veiled, dressed in black garments, with a long waterproof cloak, it would have been difficult for her nearest friend to recognise her through this disguise.

Mrs. E. A. advertised this morning for a companion," she said to the servant who answered the bell. "I am here to see her upon that business."

The servant, with a supercilious stare that brought the hot flushes to her cheek, showed her into a pretty little boudoir, rather gaudily furnished in blue and gold, where a faded lady of some thirty odd summers, was yawning over a half-finished novel.

Olive was weary in every muscle, but Mrs. Benedict Allen did not ask her to sit down; she surveyed her through a gold eye-glass, as if she had been a statue, or a picture devoid of life or feeling.

"What wages do you expect?"

"I do not know," hesitated Olive. "I have never been a companion before, and—"

"Oh, then you won't suit me. I am very peculiar—very delicately organised—and I require the most perfect experience and tact. I could not endure to be experimented on! Johnson! Show this young person the door!"

It was hard to keep back the tears, and to repress the quivering of the lip, as Olive slowly went down the white-stone steps; but she was not discouraged by this first rebuff. She had resolved to be independent—to earn her own bread, and carve out her own fortunes; and she would not expect life to be all sunshine.

She stepped underneath a street gas-light, to glance at the second scrap of newspaper in her pocket. "COPYISTS WANTED! Employment given to writers of a free and rapid hand. Apply to No. —, — Buildings."

It was a long way off, but Olive entered a 'bus and rode to the city, confident of being able to suit in this capacity, for she knew that her handwriting was bold, legible, and elegant.

A little ferret-faced man sat at the desk, under the glare of one flickering light, as Olive directed by an old crone on the stairs, entered the sanctum.

"Well, young woman what's wanting?" he demanded, in a voice not unlike the sawing of a rusty file.

"I believe you advertised for copyists!"

The ferret-faced man burst into a coarse laugh. Upon my word, ma'am, you must think we take things easy down here! Why didn't you wait until next Christmas, while you were about it?"

"I don't understand you, sir."

"We gave out all the copying long before noon. And let me tell you, young woman, if you expect to make anything in a lawyer's office you'll have to be a little prompter. Good evening!"

He bent once more over his books, and our discomfited heroine retreated.

She was faint and hungry now, as well as wearied in mind and body, but she knew that the lighted restaurants and gaudy taverns were no place for her, and humbly entered a second-rate confectioners, where a motherly-looking woman stood behind the counter. A couple of sandwiches and a few ruks made her humble meal.

"How much are they?" she asked.

"Sixpence, miss."

Olive put her hand in her pocket; to her dismay, both purse and handkerchief were gone.

"Somebody must have picked my pockets!" she gasped, growing red and pale.

The woman looked at her distrustfully. Alas! the purloins of a great city are no school wherein to learn confidence in human nature, and somehow this look of doubt stung Olive to the quick.

"You do not believe me!" she said, abruptly, "but I have spoken the truth nevertheless! There!"

Drawing a ring from her finger she tossed it upon the counter.

"I don't want to cheat you, miss," said the woman, examining the trinket, a hoop of gold, enclosing a turquoise stone. "If I give you back five shillings, it will be nearer right."

Olive took the money; it was something, at least, to rely upon in her extremity.

"Do you know of any place where I could get a respectable night's lodging for a moderate price?" she asked.

"There's Betty Lawrence lets rooms, two doors below," answered the confectioner's wife. "It's a poor place, and not over clean, but I guess it's respectable enough. She has a shilling a night."

Olive hesitated. There was one more place to which she would fain apply, before she abandoned all hope of employment for that day. She had always been quick with her fingers, and Madame Lovelle, the French milliner, in E—street, had advertised for an assistant. Olive had merely glanced at the advertisement that morning, scorning the idea of being a milliner's girl but she had grown humbler now.

Madame Lovelle sat behind her cashier's desk, a pretty woman in stiff silks and gaudy jewellery, as Olive, wet and bedraggled (for it had begun to rain hard) approached her august presence, and made known her errand.

"Ah—indeed—yes—but really, child, you ought to hold up your dress a little; it's dripping wet; and just look at my carpets, will you! I don't see how people can be so careless! An assistant! Yes of course I want an assistant. Where did you work last?"

Olive explained that this was her first essay at the millinery business.

Madame rubbed her nose with one fat, beringed finger.

"Oh, then, of course, you will not expect so much wages. I gave my last girl five shillings a week."

"Five shillings a week?"

Olive felt herself flush to the very roots of her hair.

"She took her meals here, to be sure, except on Sundays," added Madame Lovelle, calmly.

"But I could not get the merest lodging for five shillings a week."

"That's your look-out, of course. Perhaps you have friends in the city who will lodge you?"

Friends! yes, she had friends indeed, and she was beginning to see her own mad folly and self-conceit in leaving them as she had done. But it was too late for repentance now; she had made her own selection, and she must abide by it to the bitter end.

"When could I come?"

"To-morrow morning at six. Let me see your references, if you please!"

"References!" Once more Olive Arden's cheek crimsoned. "I have none."

"Then you are a fool to come here," said the milliner, coarsely. "How do I know who you are? I might have half the goods in my shop stolen before I knew it if I took in every tramp that came along. You won't do, young woman."

Olive turned and walked proudly away, feeling

almost degraded by her contact with this coarse-minded, loud-voiced virago.

But her heart sank within her as she issued once more into the wet and chilly streets. Poor Olive! It was not so easy to "conquer Fate," after all. What would she not have given to lay her aching head on Mrs. Arden's tender bosom for but one moment! But pride rose up in her pathway like an iron barrier.

She crept back through the rain and sleet to Betty Lawrence's humble domicile.

Betty herself sat darning stockings by the light of a smoky paraffin lamp.

"I hain't a room left," said Betty, when the stranger had made known her wants; "not a whole room, that's to say; but there's two beds in the room where Biddy Riley's to sleep, and Meg Macallister has a double bed in hers. What do you say to company, gals? It'll halve the expense."

Biddy Riley, a coarse, dirty-looking Celt, in a greasy shawl, and half wildly awry, was warning her feet at the dim fire.

"I don't care," she said, roughly.

Meg Macallister was quite different. She was a pale, delicate Scotch girl, whose garments, although worn and mended, were strictly clean, and her hair shone like brown satin.

"I'm sure the young person is welcome to a share of my bed," she said, looking kindly at Olive's weary face; and Olive instinctively drew nearer to her.

Meg was a daily nurse, out of employment, she told Olive after they had retired to bed, and the piteous accounts she gave of her often frustrated efforts to earn an honest living were by no means inspiring.

Presently Betty came round to gather up the miserable little night-tapers, and warn her lodgers that "talkin' arter ten o'clock was clean agin her rules!" And Olive, worn and weary, fell into a restless slumber.

The next morning she resumed her search for employment, but without better success, and at night she had just enough money left to buy a small loaf of bread and pay Mistress Betty for another night's lodging.

"I would be willing to share Miss Macallister's room again," she said.

"It's what ye'll not do," said the old woman, shrugging her shoulders. "They've taken Meg to the hospital wid the fever, poor thing!"

Olive started. Fever! Then what was the meaning of her own racking headache and trembling limbs! Was she, too, stricken down with the fell disease?

She uttered a low cry.

"Mother! mother! if I could reach you!"

She rose and staggered to the door; but there, overcome by weakness and fatigue, as well as enervated by the shock of what she had just heard, she sank fainting on the threshold.

"The old boy's in 'em all, I do believe," said Betty, hastening to sprinkle her guest's face with camphor. "Sure, I can't kape a hospital myself; and here's a card in her pocket, poor thing! Miles Dougherty will read it for me."

And Miles, a veteran Irishman, who kept a news-stall next door, spelled out:

"Mrs.—Dr.—Arden—No.—17, Pendragon-street! I'd send there, if I was you, Mrs. Lawrence, dear, for it's a long sick spell she's like to have poor child! Maybe, they'll know somethin' about her there."

How long Olive Arden remained plunged in the slumber of oblivion she did not know, but when she opened her eyes, and the soul once more shone out through their glittering portals, her adopted mother sat at her bedside, and the delicate elegance of her apartment surrounded her as of old!

"Mother!"

"My darling Olive!"

Dr. Arden came to the pillow and bent his rugged face tenderly over her wan temples.

"Don't talk too much, my dear pet; you have been very ill, and are still exceedingly weak. By-and-by you shall hear all about it!"

There was no need, however, as Olive lay there with closed eyes, sense and recollection returned to her, and she thanked the kind Provi-

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dence that had brought her back to the home she had been so eager to quit!

"Just let me say one thing, papa," she murmured, wreathing her thin arms round his neck, as he brought her a strengthening draught.

"What is it, my love?"

"Tell me that you forgive me all my temper and folly!"

"You have been forgiven long ago, poor child!"

"But it is over now, papa! I have learned a bitter lesson! Henceforward you and mamma will not know your wayward child!"

And Olive's whole after-life proved the truth of her words!

WRITING FOR THE PRESS.

Writing for the press is something of a trade. It demands some practice to acquire a concise, careful, and yet easy, flowing style of expression. Editors are often obliged to give hints to would-be writers. The following contains some very good suggestions that should be of value to those who would write for the press:—

If you've got a thought that's happy,
Boil it down.

Make it short, and crisp, and snappy—
Boil it down.

When your brain its coin has minted,
Down the page your pen has sprinted,
If you want your effort printed,
Boil it down.

Take out every surplus letter—
Boil it down.

Fewer syllables the better—
Boil it down.

Make your meaning plain; express it
So we'll know, not merely guess it;
Then, my friend, ere you address it,
Boil it down.

Boil out all the extra trimmings—
Boil it down.

Skim it well, then skim the skimmings—
Boil it down.

When you're sure 't would be a sin to
Cut another sentence into,
Send it on, and we'll begin to
Boil it down.

A WORK HELPER—Ladies who make their own dresses, and mothers with little ones to sew for, pronounce a sewing machine an absolute necessity. The cost of a really good machine has until lately been beyond the means of many persons; now, however, this is happily altered, as the Atlas Sewing Machine Co., of 186B High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W., offer a really first-rate hand machine, the Atlas "B," for the low sum of 39s. cash, or £2 2s. by monthly instalments of 5s. This is, indeed, a wonderful bargain, as the machine is well made and well finished, and includes hemmers, blinders, braid, tucking guide, corder, quilter, and all implements required to keep the working parts in order. A four years' guarantee is given with each machine. In order that all intending purchasers may be thoroughly satisfied, the makers undertake to send the machine for one month's trial on receipt of 5s. deposit with order. A stronger make is the Atlas "A," which is charged £2 10s. cash, or £2 15s. by monthly payments of 5s. This is one of the most rapid and easily worked machines we have ever seen, and the work done by it is exquisitely neat. It has also the advantage of being so strongly constructed that very coarse and heavy materials can be sewn with it as well as the finest cambric, only a slight alteration in tension and length of stitch being necessary. A more ornamental machine with silvered fittings is £3 10s. or £3 19s. by monthly instalments of 5s. each. Either of these machines would make a very useful and acceptable Christmas or New Year's present to any lady. The working of the Atlas is so simple that no instruction is necessary beyond that which is to be found in the book of instruction given with each machine. Stands and treadles which require no special fixing are supplied from 25s. to 35s., extra.

FACTETTES.

JOHNNY: "I say, father, did you ever wish you had lots of little boys?" Papa: "Yes, my son, before I had you."

"Look here, cook, are you going to obey me? I want you to understand that when my wife's not here I'm master of the house."

DOCTOR (after a hasty examination): "Prepare for the worst." Patient: "Oh, I did that when they told me they were going to send for you."

HURRY: "Louise, two-thirds of every healthy infant's life should be spent in sleep." Wife: "Well, don't tell me about it; go and talk to baby."

MRS. BROWNE: "Are you satisfied with the results of your daughter's course at college?" Mrs. WHITE: "Quite. She is going to marry one of the professors."

MRS. PARVENU: "I see something here about patents of nobility being granted." Mr. PARVENU: "I s'pose that'll make titled husbands cost more'n ever."

SCHREIBER: "Smith, the young lawyer, will make his mark some day." Bibler: "Yes; he'll have to make it pretty soon if he writes much worse."

WIFE OF HIS BOSOM: "James, I can hear burglars at your cash-box." James: "All right, my dear, nothing there—paid your dressmaker's bill yesterday."

WATTS: "Seems to have been some trouble over at Kickwire's house." Potts: "Well, yes. His wife told him to advertise for a parlour-maid, and he goes and puts in the ad., 'blonde preferred.'"

LITTLE WALTER, on returning home from school, found his mamma seated, talking to a very portly lady. "Walter," said his mother, "this is your great aunt." "Yes," said Walter, gazing at her simple proportions, "so I see!"

FLINT: "I am a plain, blunt man, Miss Brisk, and have no time for soft sentimentalities. Will you be my wife?" Maud Brisk: "I am not half so plain as you are, Mr. Flint, but just as blunt. No."

MRS. CRIMBONEAK (as her husband comes in late at night): "What does the clock say, John?" Mr. Crimboneak (with difficulty): "Nothing, madam, nothing. It's got sense enough to say nothing."

MR. BILLINGS took up his cup of what the landlady called coffee, tasted it, sniffed it, and set it down. "Have you anything to say against the coffee, Mr. Billings?" asked the landlady. "No, ma'am," answered Billings. "I never speak ill of the absent."

MR. PINKIE (10 p.m.): "My dear, the doctor says a brisk walk before going to bed will insure sleep to insomnia sufferers like myself." Mrs. Pinkie: "Well, my dear, I will clear the room so you can walk. Please carry the baby with you."

STERN PARENT: "So you want to marry my daughter, eh?" Young Man: "I not only want to, but I intend to marry her." Stern Parent: "Oh, you do! Well, have you any expectations?" Young Man: "Yes, I expect you will decline to give your consent and we shall have to elope."

RAILWAY OFFICIAL: "You had better not smoke, sir." Traveller: "That's what my friends say." Official: "But you must not smoke, sir." Traveller: "That's what the doctor tells me." Official (indignantly): "But you shan't smoke, sir!" Traveller: Ah! that's what my wife says.

MISS D.: "Angelica, why don't you marry Lieutenant Y—?" Miss A.: "First, because he has no brains, and he can't ride, dance, or play tennis. What could we do with him?" Miss D.: "But he swims beautifully." Miss A.: "Oh, yes; but one can't keep one's husband in an aquarium, you know."

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To purchasers entering the following contests:—

- 1.—A TTSHIO NI EIMT VASSE NNEI.
- 2.—HNOTSYE SI HTE SETB PILCOY.
- 3.—TTEEBR TAEI HANT NRVEE.
- 4.—EEYRV LOUCD AHS A SELIVR NNILG.

£250 amongst those who solve four. £50 amongst those who solve three. £10 amongst those who solve two. £10 amongst those who solve one.

DIRECTIONS.—Re-arrange, to represent well known proverbs, as many of the above lines as you can. Copy those you find out on a sheet of paper, placing the respective number to each, and post it, together with your order for our "Yule-Tide" Parcel and P.O. or stamps for 1s. 9d. and a stamped addressed reply envelope for prize, &c., to ALLAN WESTON & Co., Card Publishers, 188, Strand, London, W.C.

Prizes of £50, £25, £20, £15, £10, £5, ten of £1, twenty of 10s. are also offered, full particulars of which will be sent with the parcel. These prizes are easy to win and well worth trying for. They will not be divided.

CONSOLATION PRIZES—£10 will be distributed amongst any competitors who fail to secure a prize.

The Competitions will close on Saturday, December 31st, and orders from those participating should be sent in without delay.

The Prizes will be despatched on Monday, January 2nd.

Orders will be sent out same day as received, together with a notice informing competitors how many of their solutions are correct.

Remember, every purchaser of our "YULE-TIDE" PARCEL must Win a Prize.

SOCIETY.

QUEEN WILHELMINA'S chief hobby is amateur acting. She takes the liveliest interest in dramatic art, and never fails to attend the first nights at the theatres. A few years ago she had a theatre built for her own use at Loo, where plays are performed under her direction.

THE Duchesses of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha is a great match-maker. All her daughters are pretty, by far the prettiest of Queen Victoria's descendants. The eldest was the Princess Marie. She married in 1893, when less than eighteen, the Crown Prince Ferdinand of Roumania. The next daughter, Princess Victoria, married in 1894, at the same age, the Grand Duke of Hesse.

THE figure nine appears to have played a prominent part in the life of our Queen. She was born in 1819, and married a consort who was born in the same year. She ascended the Throne at the age of nineteen, and was the ninth Sovereign in succession after the Revolution of 1688. The Prince of Wales was born on November 9th, and the Princess, who is the daughter of Christian IX. of Denmark, at the time of her marriage was nineteen years of age.

THE Duke and Duchess of Connaught intend to spend Christmas at Rome, and at the end of January will leave Florence for Cairo, embarking at Brindisi on board the Admiralty yacht *Surprise*. They will probably stop at Athens, on their way to Alexandria, in order that they may spend a few days with the King and Queen of the Hellenes.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG gave the Princess of Wales as a birthday present a beautiful little fancy table covered in pretty ribbon work, the bamboo legs of which are covered with ribbon of two colours, which is twisted tightly round them in a series of spirals. Where the three legs of the table meet the shelf are arranged three bows of wider ribbon than that employed elsewhere, but of corresponding colours, the ends of the bows being completed with a small silk tassel.

THERE is no more loving and affectionate mother in existence than the German Empress. Under all circumstances, and wherever she may be, her first thoughts are always for her children, and of what will give them pleasure. As there are few things which give a child greater delight than to receive a letter through the post addressed to itself, her Majesty never missed an opportunity during the recent visit to the Holy Land of sending each of her little ones post-cards, when such were procurable, on which were views of the different places visited by herself and the Emperor.

AT no court in Europe are expenses so vigorously watched and kept down as at the Imperial one in Germany. In fact, the Emperor has a way of checking the expenditure which is altogether unique. Each day the palace controller has to furnish a certain number of dimes for a fixed sum, this sum being what William II. allows for himself and the members of his family *en pension*. Furthermore, it appears that the board of an Emperor costs considerably less than that of an ordinary mortal at one of our expensive London hotels.

THE Queen has sent some valuable and interesting gifts to the Battenberg Memorial Museum at Carlsbrooke Castle, including a number of Stuart relics which have been kept for many years at Windsor Castle. There are a silver snuff box, presented by Charles II. to one of his father's adherents; a crystal locket, with pearl pendants, which contains a lock of the hair of Charles I. which was cut off after his execution; and a gold signet ring, containing a piece of the dress of Princess Elizabeth. The snuff box bears a medallion portrait in relief of Charles I. on one side, while on the other side is a similar portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria. Princess Beatrice has sent Marochetti's original sketch for the fine monument to Princess Elizabeth which the Queen and Prince Albert erected in the parish church at Newport.

STATISTICS.

IN Italy 600,000 find employment in rearing silkworms.

THE average of wrecks in the Baltic Sea is one every day throughout the year.

IN the cities of Germany only seven or eight of every 100 persons use bicycles.

THE steam power of Great Britain represents the combined strength of 1,000,000,000 of men.

OF 1,000 men who marry it is found that 332 marry younger women, 579 marry women of the same age, and 89 older women.

THE proportionate mortality from cancer is now four and a-half times greater than it was half a century ago. No other disease can show anything like such an immense increase.

IT has been calculated that the loss from illness averages 20,000,000 weeks of work in the year, or 23 per cent. of the work done by the whole population between 15 and 65 years of age.

GEMS.

SOME of our happiest moments are spent in air castles.

HOPKINS writes the poetry of the boy, but memory that of the man.

AN hour of careful thinking is worth more than ten of careless talking.

THE shortest and surest way to live with honour in the world is to be in reality what we would appear to be.

THE constant duty of every man to his fellow is to ascertain his own powers and special gifts; and to strengthen them for the help of others.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHRISTMAS PLUM PUDDING.—The best recipe we know of for a Christmas Plum Pudding. Take three-quarters of a pound of flour, two ounces of Borden's baking-powder, two ounces of bread-crumbs, one and a half pounds of suet, two pounds of raisins, one pound of currants, ten ounces of sugar, two ounces of almonds, one pound of mixed candied peel, salt and spice to taste. Mix the ingredients well together, and add six eggs, well beaten, and three quarters of a pint of milk; divide in two, and boil eight hours.

PARADISE PUDDING.—Ingredients for pudding for four persons: Three eggs, three good-sized apples, quarter of a pound of white bread crumbs, three ounces of sugar, three ounces of currants, salt and grated nutmeg to taste, the rind of half a lemon, the juice of a whole one. Pare, core, and mince the apples into small pieces, and mix them with the other ingredients; beat up the eggs, moisten the mixture with these, and beat it well; stir in the brandy, and put the pudding into a buttered mould; tie it down with a cloth, and boil for one and a half hours.

SAUCE CAKE.—Quarter of a pound of flour, quarter of a pound of fine arrowroot, quarter of a pound of pounded white sugar, quarter of a pound of butter, two eggs, one ounce of candied orange or lemon peel. Mix the flour and arrowroot together; add the sugar, the candied peel cut into thin slices, the butter beaten to a cream, and the eggs well whisked. Beat the mixture for ten minutes, put it into a buttered cake-tin or mould, or, if this is not obtainable, a soup-plate answers the purpose, lined with a piece of buttered paper. Bake the cake in a moderate oven for an hour to an hour and a quarter, and when cold put it away in a covered canister. It will remain good some weeks, even if cut into slices.

MISCELLANEOUS.

LOUIS XIV. of France drank the first cup of coffee made in Western Europe. Coffee was then worth £5 a pound.

SAINT PETER'S, in Rome, occupied three and a-half centuries in construction, and during this time forty-three popes reigned.

SOAP has been in use for 3,000 years, and is twice mentioned in the Bible. A few years ago a soap-boller's shop was discovered in Pompeii. The soap found in the shop had not lost all its efficacy, although it had been buried 1,800 years.

A POLYNESIAN bridegroom is conspicuous by his absence during the wedding festivities. As soon as negotiations are opened with the family of his bride, the young man is "sent into the bush," and there he is obliged to stay until the wedding ceremonies are completed.

THE moustache first became common in the British army at the beginning of the present century. The Hussars adopted it, and not long afterwards the Lancs. It was not until the beginning of the Russian war that the Infantry adopted the moustache.

A SCIENTIFIC writer says that night is the time which Nature utilizes for the growth of plants and animals; children, too, grow more rapidly during the night. In the daytime the system is kept busy disposing of the waste consequent on activity, but while asleep the system is free to extend its operations beyond the mere replacing of worn-out particles.

THE Servians have a curious custom of giving a parting kiss to their deceased friends before final burial, and the observance of it has caused a serious epidemic of diphtheria. The Police Prefect of Belgrade has accordingly issued stringent orders against the custom, prohibiting it for the present, however, only in the case of those persons who have died from that malady.

IT is said that in Australia there is an hotel where rheumatic patients congregate. Whenever a whale has been taken the patients are rowed over to the works in which the animal is cut up, the whalers dig a narrow grave in the body, and in this the patient lies for two hours, as in a Turkish bath, the decomposing blubber of the whale closing round his body and acting as a huge poultice. This is known as the whale cure for rheumatism.

OWING to the very poor quality of the paper used for Chinese newspapers and to the cheapness of labour, both literary and mechanical, the cost at which the native papers can be produced is extremely low. The price of the ordinary Shanghai journal is 4 cash (500 cash to the dollar), or, at the present rate of exchange, 1-10th of a penny, and that of the "Shih Wu Pao," which is published only three times a month, and in book form, is 5 candelers, or about 1½d.

AN ancient tomb has been found under one of the streets of Genoa. Inside was a large vase of the form known as crater vases, though, unfortunately, broken into several pieces. It seems to have served as a funeral urn, and was about sixty centimetres in height and magnificently decorated. Numbers of pearls of great value are set on the edges of the vase, and round the sides are drawn in red on black many figures of priests and warriors. The date assigned to the vase is the third century before Christ.

CASE plate-glass, of which mirrors, shop-windows, etc., are made, is prepared from the whitest sand, broken plate-glass, soda, a small proportion of lime, and a much smaller amount of manganese and cobalt oxides. The glass, when perfectly melted, is poured upon an iron table of the size required, and the thickness is regulated by a strip of iron placed down on each side of the four sides of the table. Immediately after it is poured out the molten substance is flattened down by an iron roller, which lowers the glass to the thickness of the strips at the sides. It is then annealed or tempered for several days, after which it is ground perfectly level and polished to transparent brilliancy.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. L.—The landlord is within his rights.

BAUCE.—Peanuts of 1864 are of no particular value.

CURIOUS.—It would require more space than we can give.

QUERENT.—We never heard of such a building but it may exist.

RONALD.—We fear your chance of getting anything is very small.

INDIGNANT.—Everything depends on the terms of the agreement.

FRANK.—It would depend on the nature of the agreement signed.

PHIL.—We could not possibly assist our readers to solve puzzles.

ARL.—You should specify which of the works you desire to possess.

A. C.—The offender is kept in a lunatic asylum until completely cured.

R. F.—Party colours have never been the same in all parts of the country.

INQUIRY.—The wreck of the *Princess Alice* took place 3rd September, 1878.

CONSTANT READER.—What you ask for is a patent manufacturer's process.

A. B.—He is not bound to do anything of the sort; it is an absurd supposition.

R. E.—You can apply for a police court summons for illegal detention of property.

R. L.—The duties of a gas-stoker are to charge and discharge the retort furnaces.

ANXIOUS.—It can only be obtained like all other employment by personal inquiry.

S. B.—You had better consult a local dyer or cleaner, who can see the damage done.

R. G.—If the deceased left no will, his personal property goes to his widow and children.

CLARENCE.—If the man fails to appear in answer to a summons he may be arrested on a warrant.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Certainly, you can go to China and the Suez Canal without crossing the Equator.

FUELED.—You probably mean the Spanish proverb which says that on Tuesday one should neither travel nor marry.

SADIE.—The black hellebore, or Christmas rose, is not an English wild flower, but it may be obtained from almost any florist.

IGNORANCE.—The word "Mecca" is sometimes used to denote the geographical centre of interest in any widespread movement.

G. G.—Maundy money is the same value as current coin, but there are no penny, twopenny, or fourpenny pieces now in circulation.

ROS.—The apprentice is entitled to the payment specified in the indenture if he is absent on account of illness, but not for holidays.

FLAUNT.—There is nothing better than peppering fear with Keating's powder, and closing up all crevices with plaster of Paris.

HONORARY.—Pieces of damp wood laid about will sometimes attract them. Sprinkling salt on their trails will, it is said, drive them off.

DOUBTFUL.—We believe that the original pronunciation of the name Raleigh was "Rawley"; it is now usually pronounced "Rahlee."

OBSTINATE.—You are right. People grow more rapidly during the first year after birth than they ever do again in the course of their lives.

ALICIA.—Egyptian pyramids; tomb of Mausolus; Diana's temple; Babylon; Colossus of Rhodes; statue of Jupiter Olympus; Ptolemy's watch tower.

B. F. L.—Damp a sponge with spirits of wine, or methylated spirits will do, and with that wipe all your gilt frames; the dirt will be removed, but of course the gilt is not thereby renewed.

JACK.—The difference between a harmonium and an organ is that the air is forced through the pipes in the first, and sucked through in the second, hence the more pleasing tone of the latter.

IDA.—The only suggestion we can offer is to give it a good rinsing in warm water, in which a couple of handfuls of kitchen salt have been dissolved; then wring out and hang up to dry.

HARRY.—Cleaning an oil painting is work that should be undertaken by experts only; but a simple process is to cut a raw potato in halves and go over the canvas with the raw surface; that lifts the dirt.

VARE.—British India has a population of 287,138,850; China is estimated to contain 388,258,029 people, but from observation that is much exaggerated; the total population of the Russian Empire is 129,166,561.

SUFFERER.—The cat seems to have mange, and for that the best cure is unquestionably to rub the animal all over with castor oil, giving it at the same time a teaspoonful dose internally; it may lick itself and perhaps for a while sicken, but that does no harm.

NOCTURNAL.—It not infrequently happens that the groom of a wedding is made the recipient of an odd gift or two. While fashion demands that it is the woman who should be thus favoured, wedding presents for men are not altogether unheard of.

NAVILLE.—Watchmakers cannot guarantee a main-spring, for the reason that the springs are the most eccentric things in the trade. They will break at the most trying time, it matters not how careful they are in their adjustment. Some watch-springs will last for years, and others for not so many hours.

UNHAPPY BESSIE.—Surely, after four years acquaintance you are sufficiently intimate with him to be able to say that if he does not fulfil his promises forthwith you will have nothing more to say to him; or if you do not like to say such a thing yourself, get your father or mother to do it.

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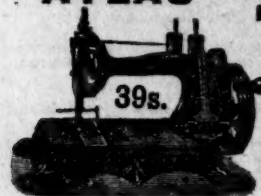
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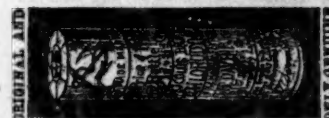
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